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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

VOC TALK:
STORIES FROM THE BACK OF THE SCHOOL

by

Robert M. Priebe

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is the meaning of adult vocational education as a special enterprise or branch within the larger field of educational practice. Underlying the purpose of this inquiry is an awareness that vocational education occupies a unique place in the educational community — a place that is somewhat removed from the mainstream constituents. The uniqueness of vocational education is not difficult to discern; it is evident in the separation of the vocational programs from the academic programs in a high school or in the distinction between community colleges and universities. The point of this inquiry is to understand this uniqueness. What is the meaning of vocational education, and how is it different from other forms of education? What does it mean to be a vocational educator?

The central access to this investigation of vocational education practice is through the lives of practitioners working in this field. Eleven men and women, each of whom spent a decade or more teaching their trades in adult vocational institutions, were invited to share some of the experiences which gave meaning to their practice. Through dialogical interviews, the instructors told stories about different aspects of their lives — about their decision to enter the trades, their development as trades practitioners, their transition to a teaching role, and their work as trades instructors. These stories, twelve of which are presented in this study, constitute the texts through which deeper understanding of vocational education practice is sought.

The instructor stories represent typical, everyday experiences of people who engage in the vocational development of other adults. Employing a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach, the stories are examined for the rich aspects of experience that can inform other experience. Through careful reading of the stories, certain essential themes can be found which give meaning to the recounted experiences, not only for the storytellers but for others who are committed to living as vocational educators.

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CHAPTER 1:

ORIENTATION TO THE QUESTION

Walking through the front doors of a contemporary vocational institution may seem, in some respects, much like entering any other educational facility. Double doors, plate glass windows, inviting foyers with shining floors and trophy cases guide visitors to reception areas where the clerical and counselling staff can be seen funnelling the daily stream of admissions and inquiries. The clean and orderly atmosphere of the front offices suggest a decidedly business-like environment which affords little indication or maybe even a false impression of what transpires in the rest of the building, unlike a hospital or an elementary school where even from the street a visitor is immediately struck with sights and smells and sounds that offer a preview of what transpires inside.

Passing through the front reception areas, past the business offices and down through the corridors among the shops and labs, a different world shows itself. Suddenly the visitor is transported from an office environment with its cool, crisp order to an industrial setting bursting with the energies of workers and machines engaged in production. Brilliant showers of sparks from grinders, blinding blue flashes from arc welders, the rattle of pneumatic tools, and the whine and hum of electric motors barrage the visitor's senses, almost veiling images of overalled and shop-coated figures hunched in communion with their machines. There are no carpets, upholstered furniture, or office plants here; only concrete floors, chipped and battered hall lockers, and metal fire doors. High overhead are the endless rows of florescent lights casting pale shadows through the smoke and dust below. Normal speech is impossible; students and instructors must shout to be heard, even when working shoulder to shoulder.

The shops are situated at the back of the building along with the storage compounds and loading docks; this is the warehouse district of the institution. The great overhead doors, material stock piles, and partially-repaired automobiles are too unsightly to be anywhere else. They would be too far out of character with the brick facades, crisp lawns, and the aluminum flag poles guarding the front of the institution. Within their surroundings, the predominantly male population inhabiting the industrial programs are at home at the back of the school; their soiled grey and blue work clothes, hard hats, goggles, and metal lunch boxes blend with the shop environment. The blue collar aura of manufacturing and construction is rooted here; this is the training ground for labor's new recruits.

A visitor could easily forget that this is part of an educational institution, not a factory or construction site. And although many aspects of the environment closely resemble the industrial workplace, the mission here is education, vocational education, intended to insure not only an ongoing labor supply but also a foundation on which men and women can build their lives as workers — an involvement which may consume most of their adult lifespan. Despite the apparent absence of chalkboards, textbooks, and many other institutional symbols of formal education, this is education, albeit, a very particular form with its own mission, practices, discourse, and characters. It has a special history and tradition which sets it apart from mainstream education.

The intent of this study is to enter the world of men and women involved in the development of this vocational education tradition and to try to understand how they create and make sense of that world. My project is to draw out the stories that vocational educators have to tell about their experiences in hopes that the meanings contained therein can lead to a better understanding of life at the back of the school.

Introduction

This study is about vocational education, or more precisely, about that which gives meaning to the people who work as vocational educators. It is a study from the inside, rooted in the experiences of men and women whose vocation is helping other men and women acquire vocations of their own. It is a study aimed at giving voice to vocational educators by prompting them to tell their stories about their own practices that show what it means to be an instructor in a training institution as well as stories that go beyond the roles performed by the individuals themselves and which speak, although often in a questioning way, to the larger practice of vocational education.

In some form or another, vocational education has been around for centuries, with ample reference to the notion of "vocation" dating back to the reflections of Greek and Roman philosophers and the scriptures. Throughout history there has been no shortage of philosophers, religious leaders, politicians, and the like who have had much to say about human work and the many social issues surrounding it, including the preparation of people for the workplace. Indeed, the subject of work has been treated from almost every conceivable discipline or field of study. Debate on work-related issues persists today as reflected in parliamentary, academic, and media discussions about matters such as labor disputes, unemployment rates, skill shortages, economic competitiveness, and workplace reform. So what would be the purpose, here, in this day and age, of inquiring into the meaning of vocational education? Having contemplated work for over two thousand years and from so many perspectives, what could be gained by returning for yet another look at the field of educational practice that is associated with the preparation of people for the workplace? Certainly there would be many educators as well as other social scientists who would feel that this territory has already been exhaustively mined and there is little likelihood of uncovering anything of much value or interest in these familiar fields.

To many educators, in particular those involved with traditional arts and sciences, vocational education is a poor cousin, something of the same non-intellectual ilk as physical education except without the common appeal of "sportiness." It is not hard to recognize the need for people to fill the so called low-to-medium-skilled jobs which exist in society; we all depend on and maybe in some ways even admire the tradespeople, technicians, and service workers who help us in our everyday lives. But for whatever reasons, non-university trained people in our culture carry a blue collar status, something which we in the "professions" seldom aspire to for our own children (Shor 1987). And somehow that same blue collar stigma has also come to characterize the field of study and practice known as vocational education and those who work within it (Kelly 1989). It is precisely this commonplace blue collar image, which in many instances has come to characterize vocational education, that contributes, at least in part, to the motivation for this study.

It is to some extent a matter of status or the lack thereof which prompts this study, a concern that the blue collar image is not only too commonly applied from the outside but that it is also too readily accepted from within the field of vocational education (Shor 1987). From the perspective of someone who works in the formal preparation and continuing education of vocational educators, I am interested in and concerned with what it means to be a vocational educator. But in a more personal way, my own experiences as a learner, instructor, administrator, and now a professor in vocational education have reinforced the notion of special status, not in an altogether positive sense, but more in a sense that leaves an unmistakable feeling of being somewhere outside of and possibly behind mainstream education (maybe in the slipstream) with the decided attitude of going nowhere. What is it that sets us apart? For there can be no question that we do stand apart.

approaching the research question

Now the question begins to emerge and show itself more clearly; it is a question about the heart and soul of vocational education, about that which gives to it the particular character without which it would not be vocational education but something else. How is it like mainstream education, and how is it different? While it is difficult to separate a field of practice from those who practice within it, my principal concern in this study is with one group of central figures, those educators through whose stories I hope to make interpretations about the field. More particularly, my intent is to explore the concept of "vocation" as it shows itself within these men and women who themselves are concerned with the notion of vocation in others. Do contemporary vocational educators have a sense of vocation or is this just some romantic notion left over from pre-industrial times? What does vocation mean to them, not only in terms of what they try to develop in their learners but also in terms of how they themselves stand in life? Does the notion of a quest for authentic existence exist only in the philosophical ruminations of people like Heidegger (1962) and Homan (1986), or is it reflected in some way in contemporary training endeavors? If not, what is reflected there? What makes vocational education what it is? What is its meaning and significance? And what does this meaning tell us or how can it guide us in the continual development and improvement of our practice in light of our larger mission of pursuing what it means to be human?

The problem or maybe the purpose in reflection is that it raises questions which, if taken seriously, lead to more reflection and more questions. So to avoid such an endless cycle of questioning, I will try to distill the preceding wonderings into a central question as a guide to this study. Simply stated, my research question is:

> What is the meaning of vocational education?
>
> > What does it mean to be an adult vocational educator? What is the experience like?
> >
> > What distinguishes it as a field of study and practice and gives it its special meaning? What does "vocational" mean in this setting? How can the concepts of pedagogy and andragogy contribute to an understanding of vocational education?
> >
> > How could an enriched conception of vocational education contribute to the larger project of recovering what it means to be human?

a question of meaning

The central question of this study is of a special kind, a "meaning" question, which implies, therefore, that it is one that cannot be simply answered once and for all. Nor do meaning questions lead to law-like conclusions or empirical generalizations that can be transported to guide us in other similar applications. Rather, meaning questions are explored for the purpose of understanding, in a deeper sense, what it means to stand in life in a certain way (van Manen, 1990). They lead us to examine how human experiences are interpreted and to reflect on the appropriateness of those experiences and their interpretations from a particular position or station in the lifeworld. Asking a question about the meaning of vocational education commits us to a search for an understanding of what it means to stand in life as a vocational educator.

My intention in this study is to begin such a search. I say "begin" quite deliberately because searching for meaning in the world of human affairs is not simply a matter of finding meaning in the things we study as in the natural science tradition, but rather, it is more a matter of studying the lived experiences of conscious, purposefully acting individuals who make meaning through their actions in their everyday world. As such, meanings in a human science conception are not static things that can be dealt with in a quantitative-analytical sense, but rather, they are "expressions of how human beings exist in the world" (van Manen 1990, 4) and therefore, they have an historical and social context to them. Meanings continually evolve and change, and so we can never say that we have found "the meaning" of vocational education and then put the project aside. The search for meaning is an ongoing endeavor in the project of being human, and in the case of this study, this search for meaning in vocational education must be recognized as constituting only a partial view or snapshot of an ongoing development which is situated in a particular time and space within a particular set of historical and social circumstances.

a question of perspective

The guiding question of this study is framed in three parts, or stated another way, it can be explored from three perspectives: from the perspective of practicing vocational educators, from the perspective of this distinct field of study and practice, and from the perspective of society at large. Examining an aspect of the lifeworld from different perspectives implies a shifting of the inquirer's position or adjusting one's optics to obtain a particular view, like adjusting the lens of a movie camera or altering one's position in the landscape.

In the case of this study, the analogy of the zoom lens of the movie camera is probably quite appropriate in that the three perspectives suggested in the question imply varying the distance to the subject; as with a movie camera, while different views can be captured, they remain nonetheless connected.

The first sub-question is up-close to the subject in that it inquires, in a very personal way, into the meaning of being a vocational educator. The purpose here is to develop a deeper and richer understanding of the experiences of people who work as vocational educators. The second sub-question is also rooted in the direct day-to-day experiences of vocational educators but it requires that we take one step back from the individuals in order to focus on vocational education as an enterprise. In other words, the intent is to develop a fuller understanding of vocational education as a field of practice. But a somewhat confusing or contradictory issue here is that we don't really step back but rather step closer so that we can look through the experiences of the individuals as their day-to-day experiences reveal the essence of being in the world in a particular way. The third sub-question carries a more philosophical tone in that it inquires into the human significance of vocational education. More specifically, the intent in this part of the inquiry is to gain a better understanding of the potential role of vocational education in the ongoing development of society.

Before leaving this part of the discussion about the research question and its purpose, let me take the metaphor just a bit further. In using an optical instrument like a microscope or camera, there is often a lot of focusing required, zooming close-up and far away, back and forth, to get the subject in proper focus and to try out different depths of field. Even the practiced user performs several adjustments and trials before choosing the final settings. Merleau-Ponty describes this attentive focusing as gazing "upon a sector of the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there" (1986, 68). It does not imply standing outside or above the landscape, but being inside and gazing from within; as such, the photographer is an essential part of the picture. My research question has been framed in anticipation of this sort of ranging back and forth so that what is sought is not three separate and distinct views of the subject but, rather, an encompassing view that includes three perspectives which are essentially integrated and which amplify one another. The zooming back and forth in this case will be a continual ranging between the direct experiences of vocational educators, the possible meanings these experiences carry for the field of vocational education, and the potential that such meanings may hold in the quest for greater humanness.

a question of significance

A few pages earlier I raised, in a rhetorical sense, the question of re-examining such an old and established subject as vocational education or its root, the concept of vocation. That was a way of opening up a discussion leading to the research question itself and thereby pointing to vocational education as an out-of-the-mainstream and low status field of educational practice, but it is necessary to return to this question to speak in somewhat greater depth to the significance of the study proposed here. Posed as a question, what is the point, in this day and age, here in western Canada, in enquiring into the meaning of vocation and vocational education? What would be the value of such an inquiry?

As was acknowledged earlier, meaning questions cannot be dealt with in a finite way, once and for all, but instead require constant or at least periodic reflection because meaning is not only found, it is also given, and therefore it changes. That is why, in discussions on meaning, we must always ground our discourse in social and historical contexts. Meaning emerges in our dialogues with such contexts. There can be little question that in the more industrialized parts of the world, human work has undergone dramatic change in this century, not that we have to go back that far to draw specific examples. We only have to think back a decade or two and reflect on our own workplaces and recall what they looked like then: they included an entirely different set of tools and activities, the technologies and their applications were of a different generation. And if we worked in fields such as manufacturing or communications, the changes would be even greater. But it is not just the technologies and their direct affects that have changed — so have the organizations, the nature of individuals employed, the consumers or recipients of our labors, and the total surrounding milieu of the workplace. Work has undergone radical change and so have its meanings to those engaging in it.

The notion of workplace change and its implications for workers has been under discussion since the days of the industrial revolution (Marx 1967), accompanied by a barrage of predictions, cautions, and proclamations from economic, religious, and political figures (Marx and Engels 1962, Weber 1976, Braverman 1974, Pope John Paul II 1981). Educators have not been absent from these discussions (Bowles and Gintis 1976, Connell 1980, Goodson 1985, Kemmis 1986) nor can they disclaim an involvement in the evolution of the present workplace and its participants. But today's workplace and many of its practices are coming under increasing fire (Rehm 1989) with the particular charge that they are both depersonalizing and dehumanizing, and that this situation presents possibly the single most damaging force in our social degeneration and ultimately in the devaluing of life and the world itself (Gardell and Johansson 1981, Green 1968). Now, in fairness, this is only one view (albeit an increasingly common one) and there are other views which suggest that we are doing the best we can (Unger 1989, Herr and Evans 1978). Some of these views will be discussed in more depth in a later part of this study, but the point here, in terms of the significance of this study, is that vocational educators, by virtue of their positions, play an implicit role in this dilemma. Whether or not we wish to take a specific position regarding the nature of human work, we are directly implicated because ours is the task of preparing and upgrading individuals for the workplace. We cannot train hospital or office workers without some understanding of what it means to work in those capacities in those particular settings, and we cannot get away with the position that we simply try to pass on the skills and dispositions necessary to function in those roles without trying to influence the nature of what transpires within them.

But before we, as vocational educators, can take a stand on workplace reform, we ourselves would need to have some conception of the meaning of work. That is not to say that we would have to share a set of common meanings but simply that some meanings, regardless of whether or not they can be articulated, will be implicit in our practice, just as some conception of childhood is implicit within the actions of a parent or teacher. One of the things that gives significance to this study is that vocational educators "pass on" to their learners some meaning of work just as parents pass on to their children their interpretations of the world. The question is, "What meanings are being passed along?"

Going beyond the issue of how vocational educators convey the meaning of work in their practice, a deeper question emerges which inquires more about the appropriateness of a conception of work for vocational educators. One of the ways in which postsecondary vocational education is commonly portrayed by economists, employers, and political leaders is as a supply mechanism to fill the holes in the labor market. This conception is characterized by discussions of labor supply and balance in typical language of the market place (Fiddy 1991, Cohen 1992). Is this an appropriate meaning for vocational educators, and should we completely give up on the older notions of vocation?

These questions are raised here with regard to the significance of this study because they are seen to be fundamental questions that all vocational educators need to address, and in particular, those of us involved in programs for the preparation of vocational educators. In the end we have to ask ourselves what it means to be vocational educators, how we understand our own identity, and whether we stand in life as persons with vocations or simply as a blue collar trainers.

CHAPTER 2:

HISTORICAL ROOTS AND MEANINGS

While the central purpose in this study is to inquire into the meaning of vocational education in the context of contemporary postsecondary educational institutions, it must be recognized that in order to come to a fuller understanding of whatever meanings are uncovered in the present, it is instructive to review their historical foundations. If we accept that human meanings and realities are historically constituted and culturally situated (Berger and Luckman 1967), then as part of an inquiry into meanings we must include some reflection on the ideas, practices, and situations which preceded and contributed to currently held traditions. One approach to understanding the present is as an outgrowth of the past, for without the benefit of an historical perspective, it is unlikely that we could develop the necessary self-understanding to carry us with any confidence into the future (Bernstein 1985, Kosik 1976).

My intent here is to begin this search for meaning by retracing and questioning some of the traditions which have contributed to prevailing conceptions of vocational education. This is an acknowledgement that, in part, we are not only the products of our experiences but also of the experiences of others who have made our experiences possible. Part of how we make meanings is the result of our own experiences, the meanings of our contemporaries, and how others meant in the past. As Bruner suggests, we construct meaning on the basis of what has been established, what is "already in place, already 'there,' deeply entrenched in culture and language" (1990, 11).

To approach a fuller understanding of everyday life experiences, an historical backward glance offers us a view of the terrain previously covered and assists us in more fully appreciating where we are now and how we got here.

It is not my intent to embark on a comprehensive historical mapping of what has evolved as vocational education; rather, what follows in this section is some exploration around the major landmarks which demarcate vocational education's historical development as a specific field of educational practice. It should be noted that this brief retracing is not undertaken with the anticipation that it will lead immediately and directly to the uncovery of current meanings. Possibly a more appropriate way to view the following discussion would be as a detour along some backroads which seemingly take this inquiry onto a side trip for the purposes of exploring some forgotten and seldom-visited sites that hopefully may enrich the remainder of the journey towards a fuller understanding of how vocational educators approach their practice.

The starting point of this examination involves turning to some of the common ways in which vocational education is currently characterized by the professional organizations and some of the leading authors in the field. The intent here is to search through formal goals and definitions offered by vocational educators in their attempts to present a view of their practice that is both accessible and acceptable to educators, policy makers, and the public. These formal statements are significant in that they represent a collective voice of practitioners and theoreticians who constitute the field. As such, they offer an official or public view of how members wish themselves and their endeavors to be perceived and accepted. They are discussed here in hopes that they will show certain meanings that can contribute to a fuller understanding of how vocational educators conceive of their particular way of being in the world.

Stepping back from the public meanings embodied in definitions and goal statements, I search then to uncover some of the historical landmarks commonly associated with the development of vocational education as a distinct field of practice. One way of approaching an understanding of what something "is" involves juxtaposing it against what it "is not." In this instance, the historical traditions of vocational education and liberal education are examined as reflections of contrasting ideologies or competing views of education and its ultimate purposes. Major stages or milestones in the evolution of vocational education are reviewed and questioned in attempts to uncover some of the residual meanings that influenced its maturation as a professional field.

Aside from the examination of definitions and distinguishing features that characterize vocational education from both historical and contemporary perspectives, there is another question which concerns the relevance of the term "vocation." How is "vocation" understood in the present context, and how important was it in the evolution of this field? Although as a term, it has lost its popularity in common discourse, it nonetheless remains as the key discriptor distinguishing vocational education from other forms of education. What is its relevance, both in historical terms of understanding human work and in current conceptions of education aimed at preparing people for a life of work? Does the recovery of the ideals of vocation offer possibilities for enriching our understanding of the linkage between education and adult work roles in contemporary society?

The final point of this discussion turns to the subject of pedagogy and its more recent adult counterpart, andragogy, as a foundation of vocational education. Questions about the meanings of pedagogy and andragogy are posed as a way of inquiring into the purely "educational" nature of vocational education. Is the practice of vocational education consistent with established principles of pedagogy or andragogy, and if so, how do these principles show themselves in practice? Are there competing principles or ideologies that diminish or detract from a fuller realization of "agogic" ideals? Do the principles of pedagogy and andragogy offer any possibilities for the continued development and refinement of the meaning of vocational education?

The preceding questions and comments are offered as an invitation for further exploration of the following themes: (1) defining vocational education, (2) distinguishing vocational education, (3) retracing historical roots, (4) recovering the notion of vocation, and (5) exploring the agogical basis of vocational education. The intent of the ensuing discussion is to open, in turn, each of these subjects and to examine them in the prospect of uncovering potential or preliminary meanings that may contribute to the larger quest of this study, that is, a phenomenological inquiry into the practice of vocational education.

defining vocational education

As was implied earlier, there is need to re-examine what is meant by the term "vocation" as it is applied in education and more particularly in the field of education that takes its name from the term. "Vocational education" denotes a particular form or branch of education that is obviously related but at the same time distinct from other forms. How is it related and how does it differ from education that is non-vocational, and in what manner is it distinct? What sets it apart? How is vocational education defined?

Turning to the current vocational education literature reveals definitions and statements of purpose that appear to quickly clear up the issue and resolve the question of what vocational education is. For example, Evans and Herr (1978, 1), in their widely referenced text on the foundations of vocational education, offer one of the more commonly cited definitions, a version of which has been adopted by the American Vocational Association:

> vocational education is that part of education which makes an individual more employable in one group of occupations than in another. It may be differentiated from general education, which is of almost equal value regardless of the occupation to be pursued.

Conveyed in this definition is an apparent connection between vocational education and employability that gives specific purpose to this form of educational undertaking as distinct from general education. In addition to a deliberate focus on the eventual employability of learners there is implied an objective of preparedness for specific occupational roles. In other words, according to definitions like the preceding example, vocational education is associated not only with making individuals employable but employable in specific occupational fields.

Elaborating on the preceding definition, Evans and Herr list three basic goals of vocational education: "(1) meeting society's needs for workers, (2) increasing the options available to each student, and (3) serving as a motivating force to enhance all types of learning" (1978, 4). Evans and Herr note that these goals are listed in the order in which they have gained general acceptance, and a few years later Professor Evans makes a case for incorporating a fourth goal: "to increase the ability of workers to improve the quality of work and of the work place" (Evans 1981, 11). Inherent in this articulation of goals statements is a glimpse at some of the prevailing issues in the evolution of vocational education practice in North America, beginning on one hand with a predominant concern for maintaining a strong and competitive labor force, and then augmented on the other hand with concerns for individual growth and development. The subsequent addition of Evans' fourth goal reflects concern for more recent criticisms of the apparent instrumentality that pervades in vocational education: a recognition that compliance with employer demands for skilled workers to fit into existing employment situations has overshadowed what should be a more central concern for the growth and development of workers including nurturance of the capacity for self-actualization as well as the ongoing transformation of the workplace and its practices along more just and equitable lines.

Other definitions of vocational education, many of which are less comprehensive than the example drawn from Evans and Herr, convey a similar character. In his treatment of vocational education from an international perspective, Leonard Cantor (1989, ix-x) provides another definition in which there is some distinction drawn between *vocational education* and *training*:

> the term 'vocational education and training' is taken to connote those learning activities, including the acquisition of skills, which contribute to successful economic performance. It thus excludes the provision of general education in school systems . . . To distinguish further between 'vocational education' on the one hand and 'training' on the other, the former is taken to comprise job-related programmes offered by educational establishments . . . while the latter refers generally to job-specific programmes offered by industry. Even here, however, the distinction is not entirely clear cut, as training, offered by Japanese industry for example, is infused by a strong desire to attend to the moral and cultural education of their employees.

Through this definition, Cantor makes two rather important points: first, that vocational education and training are both essentially tied to economic performance and, secondly, that there is a difference between vocational education and training, that difference being largely distinguished on the basis of the host institution. In Cantor's view, industry is primarily concerned with training related to improved job performance, while vocational education as offered by educational institutions is generally seen as encompassing broader concerns pertaining to individual development.

Before leaving the issue of common definitions, it may be useful to examine some additional statements in attempts to identify some of the features commonly associated with vocational education and that may contribute to the established view of the field. Two British scholars, Silver and Brennan (1988, 4-5) characterize vocational education as follows:

> In 'ordinary usage', however, vocational education is differentiated from 'the more general stages' of education by being chiefly concerned with the practical application of knowledge acquired in early stages of the educational process and the education of selected or differentiated groups.

In discussing the development of formal vocational education programs in the United States, Copa and Bentley (1992, 906) provide a similar statement of purpose:

> Increased interest was given to vocational education as a means to meet the needs of those not going on to college and of the labor force for middle-range occupations (between professional and unskilled).

While not specifically framed as formal definitions, the two preceding quotations further serve to illustrate vocational education's unique character and mission. They both convey a purpose that is often passed over in formal definitions — that is, the preparation of workers for middle-range or moderately skilled occupations (as distinct from highly skilled or professional roles). This is an important distinction in that it separates vocational education from higher education, particularly through deliberate efforts to accommodate individuals who are not university bound. As an aside, it is interesting to note that as far back as the early part of this century, educational reformers like John Dewey (1915) were hotly contesting what were interpreted as the instrumental motives in this special field of education, in particular, the classification of learners on the basis of their vocational interests.

From the various definitions, statements of purpose, and related descriptions just cited, it is possible to synthesize a general description of the field of vocational education. Weaving together the threads drawn from the four preceding quotations offers a picture of vocational education as a specific form of education that is essentially arranged in response to economic considerations. At the societal level, this means the provision of skilled workers necessary for the maintenance of a healthy labor force; at the personal level, it means equipping individuals with the necessary skills to enable them to chose and pursue an appropriate occupation for the purposes of earning a living. Regarding the vocational education curriculum, we find a focus on procedural knowledge, particularly as it relates to the performance of technical or middle-range occupations. And regarding vocational education's "clientele," we see an accommodation of those individuals who, for whatever reasons, are attracted or directed to work in the low-to-middle-range occupations.

The definitions and general statements describing the field of vocational education are raised here primarily as an initial stepping stone on the way to a more interesting type of journey. To begin this discussion by reviewing a commonly accepted definition and statement of goals is to begin with the obvious, not unlike turning to a dictionary for a definition. But it must be recognized that there are limitations in terms of what such statements can offer. One of the problems in beginning with a formal definition is that the precision and authority implied therein tends to render a tone of finality that leads to closure rather than an opening up of the issue. To settle on a definition, succinct and hard, suggests that the inquiry is finished and the issue can be closed or set aside. But in pursuing questions of meaning, as is the situation in this study, we can never say that the answer has been found and that it can be put away once and for all. Rather, to question in a meaningful way is to engage in a quest in the lifeworld, a quest which never ends but remains open to the changing meanings and possibilities which evolve through ongoing involvement and reflection in the world of everyday experience. This is not to say that definitions and their elaborations cannot serve a useful purpose in an inquiry for meaning. They can provide convenient starting points rather than ending points, but having referenced them, they eventually must be put aside to make room for other possibilities which show themselves through deep and committed investigations into human experience.

In the explication of meaning, similar cautions pertain to the utility of statements of purpose or goals. While they may serve an ostensibly useful role in rationalizing the endeavors of organizations, practitioners, and the various policy-making bodies involved in the field, goals statements have limited currency in a quest for understanding meaning as experienced by those involved in actual practice. Orderly and concise listings of goals imply shared and accepted purposes for acting; they define what is legitimately included as well as excluded from practice. Inherent in any goal statement is a somewhat idealistic portrayal of a desired future as articulated individually or collectively by someone with a particular vision. But questions arise concerning the extent to which practitioners are willing or able to conform their practice on a day-to-day basis with stated goals. For instance, would all goals receive the same level of emphasis and support, or would some take precedence over the others? And if so, which ones? How can the contradictions among competing goal statements be mediated as, for instance, between those focusing on individual development and those directed towards filling the national labor demands? And then there is the question of how the goals were developed, and by whom? More importantly, to what extent are goal statements relevant in helping practitioners find meaning in their world? How, or to what extent, do practitioners guide their own commitments and actions on the basis of formal goal statements, and to what extent is it possible for goal statements to reflect what transpires in teacher-learner interaction? Responses to these questions and others like them can be approached by turning to the practitioners themselves and by inquiring into the substance of their individual and collective experiences, the residual place of human meaning.

The point here is not to pick up the notions of definitions and goal statements and then quickly cast them aside. Rather, my intent is to acknowledge that such formal statements of intent exist for a "public" purpose. They are useful in capturing a quick understanding of how a professional field or an organization formally portrays its purpose, but we must bear in mind that they represent a particular kind of language — a public language — that embodies public beliefs. The chief function of this public language is to facilitate a fit within a social and political milieu for purposes such as acquiring funding, professional status, and common ideals among members. This public language is incapable of revealing in a more deep and meaningful way what it means to stand in life as someone committed to a particular mode of being in the world. To this end we need to engage in more personal discourse which is capable of expressing everyday actions and thoughts — how individuals make sense of themselves in their world. Such a personal language encompasses the public language but also transcends it.

distinguishing vocational education

In order to approach a clearer understanding of what is meant by vocational education in current educational discourse it is necessary to move beyond the limitations of public definitions and goals statements to examine some of the discussion focused around situating vocational education within the broader context of education. As implied through definitions like the examples cited earlier, one of the ways of distinguishing something is by contrasting it with what it is not. In the case of vocational education a contrast is often made with general or liberal education.

Silver and Brennan (1988) illustrate this contrast in their discussion of the tension that has occurred between liberal and vocational education throughout most of the history of educational thought. Focusing particularly on the nineteenth century "gentry ideal" associated with certain privileged stations in life, they trace many of the influences affecting current conceptions of liberal education to notions of "gentlemanliness, leisure, and privilege, of learning for learning's sake, the cultivation of detachment, the attainment of qualities of character . . . reserved for the male children of a country's social elite" (1988, 26-27). These were the qualities considered appropriate for involvement in respectable, high status endeavors as offered through the church, law, and politics. As was commonly accepted, such high status positions were considered to be the appropriate rewards of a liberal education.

With the expansion and diversification of worker roles that accompanied technological, economic, and social developments in this century, there have been mounting pressures to gradually transform conceptions of liberal education in attempts to soften its elitist orientation and to broaden its content base to include some of the more contemporary high status professions. But as Engel (1983, 293) points out, newer subjects such as science, technology, business, and other content areas reflecting modern developments have had to struggle to obtain a place along side more classic studies; their eventual admittance being reluctantly won on the basis that they are sufficiently theoretical and distanced from the practical world of work. Through the continued efforts of educational reformists, there have been pressures in the

1900s to move liberal education closer to the ideals of a general education suitable for all. As Dewey remarks:

> Liberal education becomes a name for the sort of education that every member of the community should have: the education that will liberate his capacities and thereby contribute both to his own happiness and social usefulness. (Dewey 1914, 4-6)

But despite the influences of people like Dewey (1917, 1914) or Goodlad (1984) in America and Whitehead (1932/1968) in Britain, the ideals of liberal/general education for all have not gained full acceptance. Vocational education stands as one of the major alternatives to the notion of a universal general education, and the debates that ensued over this century serve to illustrate the ongoing tensions between these two orientations.

Despite initiatives such as the creation of comprehensive schools and community colleges with their supermarket approach to curriculum offerings, school populations remain clearly divided between the liberal and the vocational. A similar division is evident on university campuses as well, where an uneasy partnership is apparent between liberal arts and professional colleges. The preservation of this separation between liberal and vocational education raises a number of questions. What separates liberal and vocational education? Can education be both liberal and vocational? Who should be served by each form? What determines whether an individual is best served by one form or another? To gain a fuller understanding of how vocational education emerged as an alternative form of education and to capture some of the meanings inherent in its evolution as a distinct field of educational practice, it is necessary to retrace some the major milestones in its historical development.

retracing vocational education's history

In stark contrast to the elitist notions of nineteenth century liberal education, vocational education as we know it in the western world today has many of its roots in the skilled labor demands created by the industrial revolution (Copa and Bentley 1992). The kind of liberal education traditionally offered for the socially privileged was obviously inappropriate for the preparation of workers needed for the mills and factories that sprang up with the development and spread of industrial technology and world commerce. But there is more to its history than can be explained by the industrial revolution; to understand some of the important ideals and purposes that have contributed to the character of vocational education requires turning back even further, to times predating industrialization in the western world. The point in making this brief historical detour is to trace some of the important developments that have sustained some influence on the way in which vocational education continues to be viewed and experienced as something apart from mainstream education.

Early forms of vocational preparation that occurred in ancient civilizations purportedly took place between parents and their children (Copa and Bentley 1992), where it was common practice for fathers to pass along agricultural or craft skills to their sons who, it was assumed, would follow in their fathers' occupation. Similarly, mothers would insure that their daughters were equipped with necessary home-making skills. Vocational development in this context was an integral part of child rearing for which parents took full responsibility, an arrangement that was often further facilitated by the absence of separation between the home and workplace, a characteristic of cottage industries and family farms. Although still evident in many parts of the less technologically developed world as well as in particular natural resource-based occupations such as farming, trapping, and fishing, parent-to-child occupational transmission served to maintain the necessary labor supply as well as the prevailing social structure of earlier civilizations, including situations where class distinctions were rigidly demarcated as in early Greek and Roman society where most work was performed by slaves.

As was the case with other forms of education, vocational education has its earliest known roots in the familial setting as a parental responsibility for preparing children for eventual adult roles. In this light, there was no purpose in separating vocational development from other aspects of a child's preparation for adult roles. Through modeling and informal instruction, parents could assume full pedagogic responsibility in leading their children's development. The point here is that vocational development was a fundamental aspect of child rearing, part of pedagogic responsibility that was situated in the home and fully integrated with other dimensions of parental concern for a child's becoming.

Larger societal developments, such as changing labor market demands brought about by the decline in agriculture as the primary means of livelihood and the accompanying rural-to-urban population shifts, fostered an alternative approach to parentally controlled education (McClure, Christman, and Mock 1985). On-the-job training, often referred to in vocational education literature and government publications by the abbreviations OJT or TOJ, provided a greater range of occupational choices available to young people, (that is, choices beyond their parents' occupations), allowed for greater accommodation of labor force diversification, and provided a convenient mechanism for integrating orphans and other disadvantaged individuals into the workforce (Herr and Evans 1971). The shift to on-the-job training also facilitated a more effective means of tailoring worker competence to the immediate needs of employers. A significant feature of this move was the transfer of control and responsibility for worker development from the family to the employer. However, there is a key issue in employer-controlled training that is still widely apparent and openly contested today (Canada Senate Committee 1987, Cantor 1989). At the center of this debate are the questions of whether training in the workplace primarily serves employer or employee interests, and whether such initiatives focused on the immediate labor demands of a specific employer can legitimately be called educational.

In the transfer of educational responsibility from the home to the workplace, the nature of the pedagogic relationship was altered dramatically (or possibly displaced). Parental role modeling and familial support were exchanged for employer supervision and control as the educational situation was reconfigured to support improved workplace productivity. Concern for the nurturance of individual growth and development was supported only to the extent that it translated into enhanced productive capacity in the workplace. Through shifting the responsibility for worker preparation from the home to the employment setting, vocational development was uprooted from its original pedagogic habitat and transplanted in an environment where economic returns took priority over individual growth and development.

From an historical perspective, it is apparent that the image of vocational education as a handmaiden to employers and economic policy makers is well rooted, predating the industrial revolution, but that is not to suggest that employer-based training was only a phenomenon of earlier times. In a recent study sponsored by the Carnagie Foundation (Eurich 1985) it was reported that by the early 1980s American corporations were spending an estimated forty billion dollars annually on training (not including the salaries of trainees), a sum that approached the total educational budget of the 3500 colleges and universities in the United States. In addition, Eurich reports that corporate training accommodated more participants than did the post secondary institutions. Similar trends are evident in other technologically developed countries (Cantor 1989).

As governments continue to encourage employers to extend their direct involvement in training the national workforce, the question of individual worker development versus corporate or national economic development remains a critical issue in vocational education. From a pedagogic perspective, even the sophisticated language of contemporary business management does not conceal the economic implications of a term like "human resource development" (HRD) to denote workplace training. If working people can be viewed as "human resources," as something of the same quality and importance as other materials or products, then it would follow that they could be treated like industrial system units. In this conception, human resources become replaceable parts in the elaborate systems that give form to the contemporary workplace. The central role of training and development in this scenario is to insure that individual workers are appropriately shaped to fit the available spaces created by the system. While a contemporary view of HRD would claim to effect some balance between the individual's and the organization's needs (Werther, Davis, Schwind, Das, and Miner 1985, 208-210), the ultimate goal for HRD programs remains firmly rooted in promoting organizational welfare (Schermerhorn 1984, 270).

Reflecting on the meanings that might be drawn from on-the-job training arrangements, there emerges a view of education that is oriented around making better use of people to accomplish organizational goals. Often couched in the language of efficiency and effectiveness, this view portrays education as the medium through which maximum advantage is sought from the organization's human capabilities. To neglect the development of employee potential (for the benefit of the organization) is comparable to wasteful management of material or fiscal resources.

As an alternative to on-the-job training, apprenticeship subsequently emerged as an attempt to balance the relevance of direct experience in the workplace with the demands of a defined curriculum to insure that trainees received both adequate breadth and depth in their vocational preparation (McClure, Christman, and Mock 1985). Through organized apprenticeship schemes, employer-controlled on-the-job training arrangements were tempered with legislated requirements intended to safeguard the interests of individuals entering indentured relationships whereby, over a specified period of time, trainees engaged in productive work in exchange for their occupational development. By the time of the industrial revolution in the seventeenth century, apprenticeship had become highly formalized, largely through the collective efforts of the powerful urban craft guilds which attained license to certify who could or could not participate in particular forms of work (Smith 1992). This ostensible "balance" between worker and employer interests in occupational training (among other areas of concern) has survived to the present although not without persisting difficulties marked with work disruption, litigation, and violence (MacKay 1987). Labor relations has emerged as the avenue through which the precarious balance of control over workplace practices, including training in the workplace, is maintained. Not surprisingly, proposed changes or refinements to current apprenticeship systems are often highly charged with political interests that sometimes appear to obscure the educational intents underlying them.

The significance of apprenticeship as a means of providing the vocational preparation of workers peaked prior to the industrial revolution in the seventeenth century; thereafter it was undermined largely by work fragmentation and segmentation efforts introduced in early factory systems and sustained through the growth of assembly line production (Smith 1992). Today, with the exception of the construction and manufacturing trades, apprenticeship training plays a diminished role in most western nations, although in a few cases — Britain, Germany, and Australia — it remains a central mode of inducting new labor market entrants to moderately skilled (non-university trained) fields (Cantor 1989). However, the notion of employer-institutional training partnerships has been commonly translated into a more contemporary form, cooperative education, which exists largely as an institutionally promoted initiative.

Cooperative education and apprenticeship models can be viewed as attempts to facilitate a theory-practice bridge without abdicating to employers total responsibility for worker education. But as a result of these models, responsibility for workers' education has become spread out and shared among organizations such as governments, apprenticeship boards, employer organizations, unions, and educational institutions. By their nature, these organizations bring to bear competing political and economic orientations which are often far removed from the immediate interests of the individuals seeking vocational development. The extent to which such arrangements are effective in maintaining central concern for the learner is an important question. Similar to on-the-job training situations, when political, economic, and other organizational interests gain influence in the educational arena, their voices easily drown out the calls of learners (Huebner 1984). If the learners' voices are lost, to whom then do vocational educators respond? Where, in these complex arrangements, is there a place for the hopes and desires of learners to take shape and mature under the caring guidance of someone willing to assume ultimate responsibility for their development? While training arrangements involving "industry" partnerships are often promoted on the notions of offering a more effective bridging between theory and practice, it must be recognized that resulting meanings of vocational education are necessarily influenced by the vested interests of the organizations involved.

Turning away from older workplace-oriented training schemes, a more recent approach to vocational development has emerged through the creation of special vocational schools. While the initial development of schools some three thousand years ago was specifically for vocational purposes, that is the preparation of priests, schooling as means of providing vocational preparation on a widescale basis was not common until this century (Copa and Bentley 1992). Particularly in the period since World War II as more occupations and particularly the professions became increasingly specialized and as the formalization and continued development of various occupations became associated with national economic and social well being, the provision of publicly and privately supported vocational institutions has come to be viewed in the public's best interests. These past four or five decades could be viewed as the modern era of vocational education.

Although the development of postsecondary vocational systems has occurred somewhat unevenly across the world, one of the hallmarks of industrial development has been the creation of multi-level infrastructures of private and public sector educational institutions including universities, community colleges, technical institutes, and vocational centers to provide for the vocational and general educational development of youth and adults (Cantor 1989). Of particular significance in this development was the shifting of primary responsibility for vocational preparation to the public realm where governments along with the traditional vested interest groups have assumed an increasing voice in determining the nature and outcomes of the educational process. Governments' growing involvement in vocational education can be justified, particularly at the postsecondary level, on the basis of obvious linkages that exist between availability of trained graduates and shifting national labor market demands. From governments' perspectives there are some key issues at stake here: a solution or at least a partial solution to combatting rising costs of unemployment and social assistance programs, and a commitment to shoring up national competitiveness in the international market place. In short, concerns for economic survival at national and regional levels have necessarily included governments as another major partner in providing for vocational education.

Vocational education, in the modern context, has indeed become a complex field characterized by competing views and expectations with employers, unions, governments, and educational institutions clamoring to voice their needs and concerns. The extent to which the voices and self-interests are heard, however, is another matter. As Nell Eurich (1985) points out, employers grow impatient with apparent unwillingness or inability on the part of public institutions to provide for immediate needs of business and industry and as a result, in this decade, there has been a substantial move to establish colleges and universities in the corporate sector (Eurich 1985). Confronted with larger political and economic interests of governments and employer groups, what has become of the individuals in pursuit of their vocational development? Where do they stand with respect to finding and following an appropriate path to their vocational becoming? How well can individual voices be heard above those of the larger economic interests? The move towards more modern approaches to vocational education has meant giving up certain personal qualities inherent in some of the older traditions like apprenticeship which Smith (1992, 90) discusses as "an errant process, informal and 'inefficient' by contemporary standards which nevertheless managed to develop a very high degree of technical skill, an understanding of materials, an ability to solve complex technical problems, an aesthetic of quality and in many cases a lasting loyalty to the company."

The point in this brief historical discussion is to try to bring to light some of the major developments that affected the manner in which vocational education evolved as a field of practice. Returning to the earlier part of this discussion where the concept of liberal education was introduced, it is now possible to begin to understand some of the reasons why vocational education has emerged as something quite apart and in many ways in sharp contrast or opposition to the tenets of classically rooted liberal education. Whereas liberal education is historically rooted around the gentry ideal as typified by eighteenth and nineteenth century upper class traditions, origins of vocational education can be traced back through efforts to facilitate the participation of the peasantry and simple artisans in a wage economy. A key distinction is that the latter development was oriented largely around the incorporation of lower socioeconomic groups into the workforce while the former was decidedly aimed at a life without work. In other words, initiatives for the development of these two orientations to education emanated from concerns for the opposite ends of the social continuum. But, it could be argued that this is ancient history and the earlier distinctions between education for the privileged elite and the working masses are not so sharp, particularly as vocational education has been moved further into the public realm and made available to all who are interested. However, this would be to deny prevailing sentiments surrounding the prestige or status associated with certain forms of education and the occupational roles to which they are aimed.

Critiquing the recent development of North American community colleges, Ira Shor refers to the whole initiative as nothing more than "warehousing labor" where "surplus labor is stored there and regimented" (1987, 6). Shor paints a colorful contrast between the "budget campus" and the university:

> They [community colleges] were from the start shaped outside the elite traditions of the academy, by the state for the masses, in the genre of public housing and the welfare bureaucracy. They were college and not-college at the same time, inside and outside the academy which had never seen such things before. The stark aesthetic functionalism was merely the product of the network's stark economic functionalism. The forces of work, job-market and surplus-absorption were modeling the mass college audaciously. This latest layer of schooling, aesthetically and pedagogically inferior to the rest of the academe, appeared as a model of inequality announcing itself as another "great equalizer" (Shor 1987, 12-13).

So from Shor's perspective, the two-year colleges — even with their university-transfer and associate degree programs — fail to effectively bridge the status gap between vocational and university education; instead of becoming "the great equalizer," they serve to further entrench notions of inferior education and sub-standard graduates.

Another argument exists, however, that would turn away from the separation between vocational and liberal education and focus instead on their mediation. Even in the early days of public vocational education, Alfred North Whitehead was urging for a reconciliation of the two orientations:

> The antithesis between a technical and a liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and no liberal education which is not technical; that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision (Whitehead 1968, 48; first published in 1932).

Reacting to criticisms of being too labor market oriented, vocational educators have continued in their attempts to transcend the limitations of a "training" image and to show their enterprise as truly educational through adopting many of the features and processes of liberal education such as student-centeredness and goals focusing on the autonomy and independence of learners (Weir 1987). Part of the rationale has been that the contemporary workplace requires individuals with a broad educational base that goes beyond the development of technical competence; a modern vocational preparation must therefore encompass many of the ideals traditionally associated with liberal education (Marsick 1988). The growth of professional faculties in the university would seem to underscore this point, although this development has not occurred without similar liberal-versus-vocational debates. Stepping back from the continued confrontation, Silver and Brennan (1988, 4) make the point that "all education is vocational in that it aims to prepare one for more efficient and satisfactory performance of the activities of life." Taken in this light, the traditional distinctions between various educational endeavors should seem to fade, providing impetus for the notions of liberal and vocational to blend. Elevated beyond traditional blue collar status, the concept of "vocation" would then seem to beg further examination.

recovering the notion of vocation

It is quite uncommon in current everyday language to hear people speak of their vocations; more likely they refer to their careers, their professions, their organizational positions, or their jobs. It sounds almost romantic and somewhat arcane to hear conversation of someone's vocation, and yet current usage of the term would suggest that there seems to be nothing romantic about the way it is commonly applied in distinguishing the particular branch of education that bears its name. As asserted by social theorists like Austin (1962), Berger and Luckman (1967), and Searle (1969), language plays a key role in shaping social reality by fostering the perpetuation of unquestioned vital traditions; in this light the historical tracing of key terms and their usage is important in contributing to a fuller understanding of current meanings and the practice which surrounds them. This, in part, is what is intended in the "recovery of the notion of vocation."

An exploration of early meanings of vocation takes us to the spiritual realm where it emerged as an ideal in human life (Rehm 1990). According to Calhoun (1935), the Latin word *vocatio*, (derived from the verb *vocarre*, to call), was used by the apostle Paul (I. Cor. 12:31) to express a calling from God to come forward and engage in His work. A vocation or calling in this context was associated with spiritual dimensions in that, firstly, it was a divine summons emanating directly from God and, secondly, it reflected the possession of special knowledge, talents, and purpose assumed to be characteristic of those fit for spiritual work — apostles, preachers, and prophets (Rehm 1990, 115). To early Christians, the high esteem and deep reverence inherent in the notion of vocation was something that was limited to only a deserving few — the spiritually gifted.

Another important dimension of the early Christian conception of vocation pertains to the purpose to which these special gifts were committed. According to Rehm (1990, 116), the fundamental purpose of those blessed with spiritual gifts was not in self-glorification but in "the higher principle of building a common good." Through service towards an improved quality of life for others, vocation was rendered a purposefulness which transcended personal welfare and strove toward the mediation of divine care and improvement in humankind's state of existence.

With the break from earlier Christian tradition brought on by the protestant reformers of the fifteenth century, notions of special callings were rested from the purview of those pursuing monastic traditions and made accessible to people in all walks of life. As opposed to the earlier idea that vocation was rooted in spiritual giftedness of the selected few, Luther taught that the esteem of a calling was to be found not only in special positions of the clergy but in the motives through which common people performed their everyday work for the good of others (Wingren 1957). A vocation then became the avenue through which humankind could "achieve spiritual union with God" (Rehm 1990, 116) by pursuing excellence and diligence in their earthly work, whatever it might be. The key in Luther's conception of vocation was that the particular offices or stations in life occupied by individuals mattered less than the motives for engagement in them; central to his teaching was the promotion of goodness for others (Dillenberger 1961) as reflected in Paul's notion of work for the common good. This more "public" conception of a vocation was attainable by all people if, through their work, they were prepared to commit themselves to excellence, diligence, and betterment of the human condition.

While the early protestant conception of vocation can be understood as an opportunity for common people to enhance their personal, spiritual, and social esteem, there is another side to this issue which construes work as an obligation rather than an opportunity. To early Hebrews and Christians alike, work was drudgery to which humankind was condemned by sin, "a scourge for the pride of flesh" (Mills 1973, 7). To atone for our natural state of falleness, work was conceived as a way of serving God, thereby offering a path to salvation. This theme was maintained by subsequent protestant reformers such as Calvin, Menno, Fox, and Wesley, who explained work as God's will — a means of easing human guilt when done for the purpose of atonement and not for greater personal status or material gain (Weber 1904/1987). In his landmark work at the turn of the century, Max Weber (1904/1987) illustrated the deep connections between these religious principles embodied in what he termed the "protestant ethic" and the emergence of particular work forms associated with spread of capitalism in the western world, a development which, according to Marx (1867/1967), ultimately turned on itself in the disenfranchisement of worker and purposefulness.

Before returning to the meaning and relevance of vocation in modern workplace and educational contexts, there is yet another era in work history that holds some relevance for this discussion. C. Wright Mills (1973) refers to a "renaissance view" of work which maintained through the industrial revolution until finally succumbing to modern assembly line technology and mass production. Depicted as a nineteenth century reaction to the utilitarian views of classical economists, craftsmanship represented what was possibly the final stand against the depersonalized, dehumanized setting of factory labor. In contrast to earlier religious views of work as the burden of human falleness, the ideals of craftsmanship offered a more existential view of humans as creators engaged not only in livelihood but in the performance of art — the richest interpretation of "artisan." To the craftsman conception of work was attributed deep intrinsic meaning which emanated not from external rewards but from the act of work itself. Elaborating on the essential principles or "ideals" of craftsmanship, Mills (1973) identifies features such as a deep personal linkage between the producer and the product, freedom and artistry in product design and development, and the integration of work, personal worldview, and self-identity, all of which combined in a holistic mosaic of self-development and self-expression.

The era of craftsmanship was similarly glorified in the works of other prominent social theorists from the late nineteenth century to the present (Marx 1867/1967, Engels as cited in Tucker 1978, Durkheim 1893/1966, Arendt 1958, Schumacher 1979). In many ways, the craftsmanship model of earlier times stands as the ideal towards which much of the effort of contemporary work reform is directed. Often viewed as world leaders in this area, Scandinavian work reformists have been engaged since the early 1960s in the redevelopment of workplace structures and processes in attempts to reinstate many of the craftsmanship principles sacrificed in the creation of technologically dominated production systems of the modern era (Gardell and Johansson 1981). In reaction to criticisms of dehumanization and depersonalization of the modern workplace, principles such as greater worker autonomy, increased scope and depth of work functions, and greater worker involvement in planning and coordinating the affairs of the enterprise have been promoted recently by many employing organizations in attempts to recover some of the ideals lost in the transition from craftsmanship to segmented, highly regulated factory labor.

Turning now to the contemporary workplace, the question of the relevance of vocation seems even more obscure. Is it even relevant to talk of a vocation in the present social context in which large organizations and increasingly sophisticated technologies appear to be the norm? Can one have a vocation when occupational roles seemingly emerge and disappear overnight with technological innovations and shifts in economic policy? A postmodernist view might suggest that the idea of pursuing a vocation belongs to a grand narrative of another time, and that with the passing of the modern era, notions of stable careers and lifelong goals have become artifacts of the past. More in tune with postmodernist trends would be the need for extreme flexibility in adapting to the shifting and evolving social structures resulting from corporate barons cutting the pie in the international market place. Current federal government policies would appear to endorse growing criticisms that educational institutions are unable to keep pace with our rapidly changing labor market needs and mounting economic competition from emerging Asian industries; educational policy directions of the past decade, such as those reflected in the Canadian Jobs Strategy, have had the visible effect of shifting much of the responsibility for occupational preparation from institutional initiatives to business and industry in hopes of fostering greater responsiveness and flexibility in maintaining competitiveness in the international market place (Canada 1986). Clearly, national concerns for economic viability play a predominant role in prevailing views about vocational education.

Whether approached through institutional, apprenticeship, or employer-based models, the association of training initiatives with the promotion of general economic health of society has remained as the over-riding factor in determining the character of vocational education in the present as well as in the past. With increasing concern for international competitiveness as the route to our own national economic well-being, there is the obvious danger of larger societal goals taking precedence over individual needs and aspirations for personal growth and development. In such a scenario it becomes too easy to see vocational education simply as an intervention in the national economic development. But where is the individual in all of this? How would a sense of vocation and personal contribution through meaningful work fit within this conception? Is it possible for individual workers to perceive themselves as anything more than instruments of national or corporate economic interests? With the spiritual dimensions of vocational pursuit overshadowed by materialist interests and with the ideals of craftsmanship replaced by the over-regulated and highly routinized conformity to prescribed organizational roles, it would seem that historical notions of vocationalism are in danger of being largely displaced in the contemporary work world.

The question must be raised concerning what these current trends mean for vocational education. If the popular conception of work is accepted primarily on instrumental grounds with regards to maintaining a competitive labor force, can vocational education be construed as anything more than a supply mechanism for appropriately skilled labor? Such a view would seem to lend credence to Shor's charges of "warehousing labor" (1987, 6). But if there is any substance to the goals of vocational education mentioned earlier, then the larger demands of the labor market cannot be allowed to subsume the developmental needs of individuals. If vocational education truly represents a form of education that attends specifically to the vocational development of individuals thereby enabling them to experience through their work greater purpose and meaning in their lives, then societal economic interests must be countered with a more basic concern for individual development. This means that we cannot give up on the centrality of "vocation" in the endeavors of vocational education even though we may not fully understand its meaning in current context. Consistent with Huebner's notions (1984), what we need to do is to explore more fully the possibilities of vocation in reconceptualizing vocational education as a way of assisting individuals in developing purpose and meaning through their work as well as in the rest of their lives. Before doing so, it would be useful to briefly explore the other side of the concept of vocational education, that is, the educational side since up to this point in the discussion the "vocational" aspects have been the primary focus. What about the "educational" dimensions? How is vocational education understood as a field of educational practice? What is its basis, and how consistent are its underlying principles with other educational fields? More specifically, in what respects are the notions of pedagogy or its adult counterpart, andragogy, relevant to an understanding of the practice of adult vocational education, and what possibilities do they hold for a richer conceptualization of this particular field?

exploring the agogical basis of vocational education

In the context of this discussion, by turning to "agogical" interests is meant a shifting in focus away from those attributes and influences which give vocational education its distinguishing "vocational" character and inquiring instead into its purely educational nature. Agogical questions ask about what happens between educators and learners within situations intended to nurture the latter's vocational development. An agogical focus requires putting subject matter aside for the moment to enable a clearer view into the practice of leading and supporting human beings in their becoming.

The notion of "education as leading" can be traced to Greek origins. The root word for education is the Greek *educare* which means "to lead into." Another Greek term for leading is *agogos*, which in conjunction with *paides* (meaning child) gives us the term "pedagogy" — literally translated as "leading children" (van Manen 1991, 35). Similarly, andragogy, the adult equivalent of pedagogy, stems from the Greek *aner* or its derivative *andr* (meaning man) (Knowles 1970, 38). At face value then, pedagogy is used to characterize the situations and relationships through which adults attempt to lead or guide children into their development towards adulthood. In a parallel vein, andragogy denotes situations and relationships through which adults consciously attempt to influence and support other adults in their striving towards fuller development of their adult being (Allman 1983). My intent is to question the agogical meanings in vocational education by searching through the notions of andragogy and pedagogy in hopes of uncovering their possibilities for enriching an understanding of this field of practice.

Since this study involves a quest for meanings of adult vocational education, it seems promising that adult vocational education might to some extent relate to the philosophical orientation or guiding principles of the more general field of adult education. However, this is not to suggest that adult vocational education should automatically be construed as a sub-set of adult education or that the two fields share a common philosophical orientation; as Lindeman (1961, 5) points out, "Adult education . . . begins where vocational education leaves off. Its purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life." Does this mean, then, that vocational education for adults is an entirely different undertaking than adult education as it has come to be understood? If andragogy is the accepted foundation for the practice of adult education, and if the separation between adult education and vocational education is as clear as Lindeman suggests, does this mean that adult vocational education is not served by the principles of andragogy? If this is the case, then what provides its agogical basis? How do adult vocational educators conceive of their leading? The intent here in exploring meanings of andragogy is to open the question regarding its possibilities for informing an enriched view of adult vocational education. In the same light, consideration of pedagogical principles is also included as a backdrop against which a richer understanding of andragogy as an appropriate basis for adult vocational education may be juxtaposed.

The Greek origins of the term "andragogy" are somewhat misleading in that they might imply to some that common usage of the term may be traced back to earlier civilizations, as is the case with pedagogy. However, the validity of this assumption appears somewhat clouded. Davenport (1987, 17) indicates that the term was coined in 1833 by a German educator, Alexander Kapp, to portray the educational disposition of Plato. But Davenport documents that another prominent German educator, John Frederick Herbart, objected to the term which subsequently fell from common usage until the mid-1900s when French, Dutch, and Yugoslavian adult educators reintroduced it. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, through the publication of Malcolm Knowles' article "Andragogy Not Pedagogy" (1968) and his subsequent text, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* (1972), that the concept of andragogy began to gain popularity in North American adult education circles (Davenport 1987, 17). Because of the apparent impact of Knowles' early work in fueling the adult education movement in the North American university scene, Davenport points out that many adult educators mistakenly assume that the term "andragogy" was actually coined by Knowles.

In the two decades following Knowles' popularization of the term, the significance of the andragogical concept has been both glorified and repudiated in the adult education literature. This debate, which is only now showing signs of subsiding, can be characterized by at least three competing views. In one camp are the proponents of andragogy like Knowles (1985, 1981, 1979), McKenzie (1979, 1977), and Carlson (1979) who defend the conception of andragogy as a necessary counterview to what they see as the inappropriate application of pedagogic principles in adult education. A second camp, possibly best characterized by the work of Elias (1979) and Davenport (1987), portrays the notion of andragogy as an artificial construct intended at best to elevate and enhance the professional status of adult education and its practitioners. A third general view, although more heterogeneous in nature, maintains the centrality of andragogical principles in adult education theory while urging more concerted inquiry into its relationship to pedagogy and human development as a basis for reconceptualizing educational practice as a lifelong endeavor (Podeschi 1987, Yonge 1985, Allman 1983).

What is there about andragogy that makes it such a controversial and potentially divisive matter among adult educators? Knowles himself acknowledges that part of the North American debate emanated from the manner in which he set up the ideals of andragogy as a counterposition to the accepted principles of pedagogic practice as reflected by the sub-title "Pedagogy Versus Andragogy" (Knowles 1979, 52). It should be noted that in the subsequent edition of *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, the sub-title was changed to read "From Pedagogy to Andragogy" in obvious attempts to overcome the previously implied dichotomy (Knowles 1980). But there is more to the debate than the perceived artificiality of the implied separation between andragogy and pedagogy. More current thought on the issue centers around criticisms that the earlier conception of andragogy was overly simplistic, focusing almost exclusively on instructional methodologies that appeared to be more consistent with general characteristics of independent, free-willed adults. Even among proponents of andragogy, there is apparent dissatisfaction with the notion of andragogy as merely a set of appropriate techniques based largely on the view of adults as experienced, responsible, and self-directed learners (Yonge 1985).

In searching through adult education literature of the past two decades, it becomes immediately apparent that discussions of andragogy are almost never complete without comparing and contrasting it with its counterpart or parallel form, pedagogy. So to explore the meaning of andragogy is to invite a dialectical inquiry into "what it is" and "what it is not." To anchor this dialectical view, Knowles laid out some basic principles which have served as cornerstones upon which a number of andragogical meanings have been built. In one of his most recent works (1985, 8-13) he reiterates the assumptions which have formed the basis of his teachings on andragogy since the 1960s: 1) the concept of the learner; 2) the role of the learner's experience; 3) readiness to learn; 4) orientation to learning; and 5) motivation to learn.

According to Knowles, the difference between pedagogic and andragogic conceptions of the learner is largely a factor of perceived dependence versus independence. Children are generally seen as dependent persons who are unable to take responsibility for their lives and must therefore be closely guided by teachers or parents. Adults, by definition, are seen as more self-directing beings who have a deep psychological need to take responsibility for themselves. When applied to learning, this assumption of self-directedness emphasizes that adults have a need to establish the conditions of their own learning endeavors in accordance with their personal interests, aims, and aspirations. Knowles goes on to point out that when adults who are generally self-directing in the rest of their lives find themselves in educational situations, they often revert to a school-conditioned state of dependency from which adult educators must then lead them out.

A second andragogical assumption concerns the nature and extent of experience which adult learners bring with them to an educational situation. As a product of their age as well as their involvement in a diversity of roles as parents, spouses, workers, and community members, adults have accumulated not only a greater volume but also a different quality of life experience than is possible for children or youth. According to Knowles, this experiential dimension of adulthood has great significance in the facilitation of learning experiences for adults. Their extensive and diverse experiential backgrounds can serve as one of the most valuable resources in educational situations where learners are encouraged to share the benefits of their experiences and to reflect on the relevance of others' experiences to their own situations. This pooling of experience has the potential for allowing individuals and groups to reflect on their habitual ways of thinking and acting as reflected through their preconceptions, prejudices, and world views. But more importantly, Knowles makes the point that adult self-identity is directly tied to the individual's life experience, and to ignore that experience is to ignore the person (1985, 10-11).

Knowles' remaining three andragogical assumptions (readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn) are closely related; therefore I will discuss them in the context of disposition to learning. Knowles indicates that adults pursue learning activities in response to their perceived needs to engage more effectively in some aspects of their life roles, a point that is well supported by the research of Allen Tough (1971, 1968). These personal learning needs arise from assessments of current and future life situations that cause adults to reflect on where they are now and where they want to be (Knowles 1980, 11); hence their learning pursuits are generally characterized by a desire to affect their life situations in the here and now as opposed to the delayed application of knowledge inherent in the education of children. The implication of this life-centered orientation is the importance of helping learners create an effective linkage between learning experiences and individual learning and developmental needs. Acknowledging the purposefulness underlying most adult learning, Knowles focuses specifically on more existential factors which he considers the most potent motivators: "self-esteem, recognition, greater self-confidence . . . and the like" (1980, 12). In other words, he sees adult learning as a purposeful endeavor in support of individuals' efforts to become, or as Homan (1986) expresses in Heideggerian terms, a force in the human quest for authenticity.

So what can be made of Knowles' andragogical assumptions? Do they provide an adequate basis on which to ground the practice of adult education and, more specifically, adult vocational education? Do they justifiably distinguish adult education as a field of practice in its own right? As mentioned earlier, there is not wholesale endorsement of these assumptions nor of the legitimacy of the andragogy/pedagogy distinction implied therein. There has been considerable debate around this issue in the past thirty years, and some of these opposing arguments need to be examined before turning the issue around and inspecting it from a pedagogic viewpoint. Possibly the most vocal critic of the andragogic movement has been John Elias (1979, 252) who describes the North American andragogic initiative as little more than "an attempt . . . to enhance the professionalization of the field of adult education." While acknowledging that adults and children are existentially different in physical and social characteristics, he contends that these differences do not significantly impact principles of teaching and learning which, in his view, remain fundamentally the same for all human beings.

Some adult educators have questioned Knowles' andragogical principles in terms of their adequacy and effectiveness in providing a unifying framework for adult education. Houle (1972), London (1973), Davenport (1987), and others criticized the dichotomous separation of pedagogy and andragogy, advocating instead a re-emphasis of the unity in all educative endeavors. Another common argument charges that andragogy was conceived as an alternative to what was a poorly developed and outdated notion of pedagogic practice, and that andragogic principles as articulated by Knowles are simply reflections of progressive pedagogy (Day and Baskett 1982). Critics like Hartree (1984) and Conti (1985) attacked Knowles' conceptual sloppiness because of the apparent ambiguity between andragogy as a theory of learning or as a theory of teaching. Many of the critics concede, however, that andragogy is indeed a catchy word with its greatest value as a public relations device (Davenport 1987). But to reduce this whole concept of andragogy to a simple "catch phrase" would seem to be overlooking its potential to inform an important way of being in the world. If we accept that the andragogy/pedagogy distinction is based on a false dichotomy, would it not follow that adult education is therefore an artificial construct which would mean then that the education of adults is essentially the same as the education of children?

Reflecting on the andragogy discussions carried on through the adult education literature for over two decades, there is an obvious need to sustain a dialectical analysis in hopes of approaching a more effective mediation of the inherent contradictions surrounding the principles of andragogy. To date, the debate has been invaluable in that it has offered a focus around which adult educators have been encouraged to reflect on the basis of their practice. But in critiquing the andragogy debate, some adult educators like George Yonge (1985) have advanced the notion that the discussions have been frustrated in part by a preoccupation with "technical" meanings that infer that education can be understood simply on the basis of teaching and learning — the grounds on which Knowles developed his basic assumptions. Turning the discussion away from methodologies, Yonge focuses instead on agogic situations and relationships, that is, situations where adults assist and accompany either another adult or a child in their development (1985, 160-161). While recognizing that a discussion of agogic situations and relationships cannot occur without reference to teaching and learning, Yonge's point is that these two aspects by themselves are inadequate for uncovering a fuller understanding of what it means to stand in life as an andragogue or pedagogue.

Like others who have contributed to this debate, Yonge also bases his conception of the agogic sciences on the Greek root words *pais* (meaning child), *aner* (meaning adult) and *agein* (meaning to lead or accompany). To Yonge, the key distinction is to be found in *agein* which he prefers to translate as "accompaniment." Building on Heidegger's notions of *Dasein* as the fundamentally human way of being-in-the-world and *Mitsein* as being-together-with-others, Yonge argues that the central concept for all agogical sciences is the structure of the relationships required in the various forms of accompanying others in the world (1985, 162-163). In other words, the relationship between an adult accompanying a child is essentially different than the relationship between an adult accompanying another adult. These two forms of relationships are distinguished in a number of ways. Drawing on the work of Oberholzer (1977), Yonge cites fundamental differences between pedagogic and andragogic situations.

The first pertains to the difference in nature and position of children and adults in society. Whereas children begin life with no responsibility and only gradually assume duties and expectations as they progress towards adulthood, adults exist within the social order where they must take responsibility for its maintenance and development through their participation in it (Yonge 1985, 164). This difference in social positions translates into differences in obligations and duties. Since most societies hold certain views concerning what children need to master to become active, responsible participants, decisions about their learning are often made on their behalf with limited opportunity for their own expression of needs or interests. Adults, on the other hand, have some choice concerning which obligations they will meet and how they will meet them, and as such, their self-determination remains intact. Social positioning then can be recognized as an important factor in distinguishing how children and adults enter into an agogic situation.

Another important factor concerning agogical relationships that Yonge draws from Oberholzer pertains to the issue of authority. In a pedagogic relationship there is recognition by adults that children need support and guidance as they move from a state of dependency to one of increasing independence. This relationship requires that adults take responsibility for the ultimate well-being of children until they can care for themselves. However, when adults enter into an andragogic situation, the relationship between andragogue and learners is more equal or balanced in that the learners too have achieved some state of adulthood and they have a need to be treated accordingly. The authority of the andragogue is vested in an assumed advantage of knowledge or expertise to which the learners appeal. Particularly in an andragogic situation, the relationship of authority exists largely at the pleasure of the learners who hold ultimate control over its acceptance or rejection. As Yonge states, "Thus, Pedagogy and Andragogy both are characterized by a relationship of authority but with a different basis and character. This difference, in turn, leads to the entire relationship of accompaniment (agogic) being quite different as well" (1985, 165).

What Yonge has captured and what many of the earlier proponents of andragogy have apparently failed to distil is the essential importance of the agogical relationship, without which the discussion of teaching and learning lacks context. Turning away from andragogy for a moment to focus on pedagogy, we find that the agogical relationship is a central foundation in Van Manen's recent treatise, *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness* (1991). An examination of this work reveals a number of issues that appear instructive in informing a more thoughtful conception of andragogy.

Yonge's notions of agogical responsibility and authority are part of what Van Manen (1991) presents as the conditions of pedagogy. The concept of responsibility stems from a recognition that learners, whether they are children or adults, grant us responsibility when they call on us to serve them. They do so by placing themselves in our care with the understanding that what we do as educators is done on their behalf, in the best interests of their "becoming." It could be assumed that caring for adults is a lesser responsibility than caring for children since adults, by definition, assume considerable responsibility for themselves. However, it is not so much an issue of lesser or greater responsibility but rather one of a different kind of responsibility. Adults are not passing through a stage on their way to becoming adults; they are already adults. But what they seek from an andragogical situation is guidance and support in becoming more fully developed and more fully functioning so that they can live their lives in a more potent way. If the authority granted to andragogues is handled in an irresponsible way, the adult's quest for greater self-development can be extinguished as surely as that of a child. We only have to look to those adults who have given up on education as a viable way of attaining greater potency in their lives.

It follows that "care" necessarily constitutes another of the conditions (what Van Manen refers to as a precondition) of pedagogy. "To care" in this sense means more than simply to keep from harm; it means making a personal commitment to the other. It means that whatever is done in response to the learner's call is done through a moral obligation to support the other's becoming. We can see this moral obligation most clearly in parental care for our children where to be a parent means to live for others in a caring way. It is through an extension of this caring relationship that teachers strive to serve in *loco parentis* or "in place of parents." Obviously we care for children and adults in different ways, but the essence of care remains morally rooted in our concern for others. Andragogical care reflects less of a parental stance than that of a travelling companion or guide who has gone this way before and who therefore can offer some guidance concerning roadblocks, important side trips, and alternative routes. In an andragogical situation, the guide makes the journey at the request of the learners in recognition that the eventual course may involve uncharted terrain and that the destination may change as the learners encounter new vistas to explore. The andragogical guide must also be aware that adult learners are themselves seasoned travellers who have made many journeys in their own becoming. Nonetheless, when approached for guidance, the andragogue accepts responsibility for the care of the travellers in the knowledge that without a dependable guide, many journeys could not be taken.

In his treatment of the pedagogical experience, Van Manen (1991) points to a number of fundamental qualities that could further a dialectical understanding of the pedagogic/andragogic relationship. His exploration of the nature of the pedagogical situation, the pedagogical relation, and pedagogical action offers an invitation for adult educators to similarly examine the basis of andragogic experience. Approached in the vein advocated by Yonge, this examination would move beyond the discussion of teaching and learning to inquire more deeply into the substance of andragogic experience. While such in-depth inquiry into this issue is not the main intent of this study, the andragogy/pedagogy discussions leads to some important questions concerning our understanding of the agogical basis of adult vocational education. How are andragogical and pedagogical principles embodied in the practices of adult vocational educators, and how prominent are these principles in determining the nature of this field of practice? To what extent can adult vocational education be understood as andragogic or pedagogic practice?

If we make the logical assumption that vocational education for adults should reflect an "adult education" orientation, then it would follow that andragogy should necessarily provide the agogical foundation for this field of practice. But when we refer to many of the assumptions offered as andragogical principles we find scarce evidence of them in most adult vocational education settings. Instead we are more likely to find programs that are highly structured and regulated around the imposed requirements of particular certification and licensing bodies. Governmental boards, professional associations, and employer bodies carefully prescribe and monitor course content and learner performance standards to ensure that graduates can successfully meet expectations determined for their particular occupations. Typically, there are few if any opportunities for individuals to design their own learning programs or to pursue their personal development goals within the rigid confines of vocational education program models. Characteristic of the means-ends curriculum orientation which predominates in vocational education, adult learners in these settings find themselves being processed by a system designed to equip them for future employment. Where, in this setting, can andragogy show itself, and where is there room for the individual to grow into a vocation?

Recognizing, on the other hand, that we cannot simply eliminate particular requirements concerning subject matter and performance standards, it might seem that opportunities for andragogical practice in vocational education must remain a remote ideal at best. Would this mean, then, that adult vocational education is more appropriately served by pedagogical principles? But this would seem to pose an even greater contradiction, that is, if we believe that accompanying adults is inherently different than accompanying children. All of the foundations of pedagogy speak to guiding children in their development and maturation towards adulthood. To conceive of adult vocational education in this light would be treat vocational development as maturation, thereby forcing adult learners back into a state of immaturity.

A more recent position taken by some adult educators (Knowles 1979; Pratt 1988) suggests that adult education situations often require both andragogic and pedagogic relationships. This more compromising view is based on the notion that, depending on the particular situation, adults may require more guidance and direction (even prescription and coercion) than in other situations where they can exercise self-determination and self-direction that is more characteristic of the rest of their adult being. This view allows for more pedagogic treatment in situations where social constraints like licensing and certification requirements necessarily impose structures and standards on the educational process. This view can be reduced to the understanding that when social imperatives prevail, that is, when a particular educational situation is conceived around preparation for a defined social role that requires specific capabilities, a pedagogical situation exists. On the other hand, in educational opportunities that are intended primarily for learners to pursue their own needs and aspirations, an andragogical situation exists. Viewed in this light, the question for adult vocational education is then not so much a matter of whether andragogy or pedagogy is most relevant, but rather, whether adult vocational education should serve to prepare adults for defined social roles and/or to enable them to pursue their own personal becoming. If adult vocational education is limited to occupational role preparation (as many would suggest is currently the case), then where is there a place for vocational development as understood through the concept of authentic existence? This question turns me back to the central purpose of this study in that to respond to it requires renewed efforts in the search for the meaning of vocational education.

I will begin to address this question along with some of my earlier questions as I conclude this chapter by attempting to draw out some of the meanings that have surfaced thus far in my review of historical development surrounding vocational education. Hopefully, these meanings can serve as a preliminary foundation for the continuation of my inquiry into the experiences of men and women who live their lives on a day-to-day basis as adult vocational educators.

retracing some preliminary meanings

The intent in this chapter has been to search for meanings in some of the historical developments associated with the field of adult vocational education. This was undertaken in the understanding that social reality is in part historically constituted and to ignore the developments preceding the contemporary situation is to ignore the question of how the present came to be. Recognizing that this search has been somewhat broad ranging, some of the meanings that were uncovered in the preceding parts of this chapter are consolidated here.

My search began with the obvious — a look at the way in which vocational education is commonly portrayed to the public by academic leaders and professional organizations representing this field. In the definitions and goal statements could be found an illustration of the separateness that sets vocational education apart from general education. Although the goal statements refer to an expansive mission that includes meeting society's labor demands, promoting career awareness, enhancing general education, and improving the quality of work and the work place, the extent to which these statements (particularly the latter two) characterize vocational education practice is questionable. However, these are public statements, and whether or not they adequately reflect educational practice, they do represent the way in which vocational educators wish their roles to be seen. More importantly, what can be drawn from this brief examination is that among vocational educators there is a collective view that they stand apart from general education and that this separateness relates to their association with (or responsibility to) society's labor demands.

Extending this notion of separateness, the comparison of vocational and liberal education exposed some of the historical traditions that have set them apart. Whereas liberal education was rooted in the traditions of the socially elite, vocational education owes its origins to the other end of the social spectrum. Liberal education was seen as preparation for "the good life" and vocational education for an existence of sweat and toil under the direction of others. In the contemporary situation the split shows itself between high status professionals and blue collar workers. Despite various social (including educational) initiatives intended to blur this distinction, the separation continues to show itself, whether in educational settings or the workplace. But if, as claimed by some, all education is ultimately vocational, and through vocation we find liberation, what sustains the liberal-vocational separation? Or is this existentialist notion of vocation no longer relevant?

Retracing vocational education's history highlighted some of the stages and transitions that imprinted its character. Our earliest conception of vocational education was situated in the familial setting where child rearing included preparation for adult work roles and where parents accompanied their children's vocational development by working side-by-side with them on a daily basis. Although from our current perspective such arrangements would be considered simplistic and limiting, they nonetheless existed totally within the context of a pedagogic situation.

In the ensuing shift to on-the-job training arrangements, the traditional pedagogic relationship was altered or replaced by the guiding interests of employers who offered job preparation in exchange for labor. Apparent here was the emergence of economic priorities within the vocational education milieu and the accompanying notion of workers as productive resources. Pedagogic interests gave way to economic interests.

With the spread of apprenticeship systems through much of the western world, organizational dimensions of vocational education took shape. As craft guilds, employers, and eventually governments recognized the importance of skilled labor in sustaining social, economic and political objectives, complex partnership arrangements evolved to regulate participation in the common crafts. Training, along with conditions for entry to practice, licensing, and remuneration fell under the purview of these regulatory partnerships. With the adoption of apprenticeship models, the dominant influence that employers held in on-the-job training arrangements was replaced by the broader influences of other societal groups. Occupational preparation thus became the child of the larger society in which pedagogic interests had to compete for priority among diverse economic and political concerns.

As the role of governments in the western world expanded with the evolution of modern society, interests affecting national well-being were increasingly drawn beneath the governmental umbrella. In the field of vocational education, this was reflected in the post-war creation of publicly supported vocational schools ranging from comprehensive schools to professional colleges in the universities. Supported by the need for a vibrant labor force to sustain internal economic development and to shore up competitiveness in the international markets, governments saw the development of vocational education infrastructures as a key to national economic health and prosperity. In the current scenario, economic and political perspectives play an increasing part in the meaning of vocational education.

In terms of my quest for meanings, the retracing of historical developments in vocational education has shown how this field has emerged from its informal origins in the familial setting to a complex orchestration of major societal forces. What began as a fundamentally pedagogic situation has been transformed to an arrangement where agogic concerns can be easily overshadowed or possibly lost altogether. The apparent displacement of agogic concern raises the question of whether or not vocation is any longer a relevant ideal for this field.

Part of my intent in this search for meanings involves exploring possibilities that might contribute to a richer understanding of human "being." The concept of "vocation" would appear to hold such potential. Retracing the meanings of vocation from earlier periods to the present, we find that the original notion of divine calling to the spiritually gifted has been reinterpreted to mean a calling for common people to work for the general good of humankind. But the transformation of work and workplace practices as well as the approaches used to prepare people for working roles seem to be increasingly inconsistent with the development of a sense of vocation. Yet there are signs that, through efforts like work reform initiatives, without a sense of greater purpose, work is reduced to meaningless activity that is largely in vain. Once done, it must be done over again. As a result, workers too see their lives as lacking meaning or purpose. Despite its virtual disappearance from common discourse, the concept of vocation appears to offer some hope as a basis for reconceptualizing human work and the ways in which preparation for work life could be approached. The quest for meaning that guides this study therefore includes inquiry into the possibilities for the ideals of vocation to exist within contemporary vocational education practice.

The apparent diminishing or displacing of agogic concerns that was reflected throughout the historical development of vocational education raises the question about the educational substance of this field of practice. As a form of adult education, why do the principles of andragogy seem so inappropriate to adult vocational education practice? On one hand, the answer might be found in the way in which andragogic principles have developed (as a particular view of teaching and learning), and on the other, the answer might lie in the practice of vocational education itself. As this study progresses into the exploration of vocational educators' life experiences, this question of agogic significance plays a guiding role.

As an initial stage in the search for meanings undertaken in this study, the review of various historical developments addressed in this chapter have provided further grounds for subsequent inquiry. My intent was not to locate meanings from the literature that could be either upheld or disqualified in later stages of this research; rather the historical retracing was undertaken to better inform the nature and direction of the inquiry which will follow. As such, the discussion in this chapter was intended primarily as background views which uncover some preliminary meanings which could offer clues or hints for the remainder of the study.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

As indicated in the two preceding chapters, this study is about meaning. Therefore, the guiding questions which form the basis of this inquiry are of a special kind, a kind which cannot be answered quickly and objectively, once and for all. To examine meaning is to commit ourselves to an exploration of life as it is lived in the everyday world so that we can better understand what it means to stand in life in a particular way. Exploring human meaning is not a search for neat and concise answers but rather a quest for possibilities that can inform our actions as we endeavor to live our lives in a more human way. As such, we can see that meaning making is a decidedly human way of being in the world. The notion of exploring meaning has turned me towards a particular research orientation which resonates with my own personal research interests — human science research. It is within the context of this paradigm that I open this discussion of my research orientation.

human science

Among many North Americans a narrow conception of science prevails, which is rooted largely in the established practices (goals, attitudes, and discourse) of physical scientists. Science is often viewed as something quite detached from or unrelated to the pursuit of a truly human mode of existence. But for those who have had exposure to European scholarly traditions, particularly through association with some of the German and Dutch schools in the early and mid-parts of this century, there exists a broader and possibly more original view of science which extends beyond the realm of the physical sciences as we know them today to include what have been termed the "human sciences."

Origination of the term "human science" results from an attempt (albeit a somewhat inadequate one) to translate Wilhelm Dilthey's notion of *Geisteswissenschaften* through which he tried to distinguish the study of human phenomena from the study of nature, *Naturwissenschaften* (Dilthey 1987). The German word *Geist* may be translated as spirit or mind, but neither of these words seems adequate in portraying that which distinguishes humans from other animals. As Pusey claims, "Every attempt at an English translation produces an ugly contrivance that makes one wince" (Pusey 1987, 57). Inadequate or ugly, "human science" remains as the best and most accepted attempt at an English translation of Dilthey's notion of *Geisteswissenschaften*. The significance of the term is that it illuminates the relevance of a particular research attitude. As Van Manen explains,

> at the risk of oversimplification one might say that the difference between natural science and human science resides in what it studies: natural science studies "objects of nature," "things," "natural events," and "the way that objects behave." Human science, in contrast, studies "persons" or beings that have "consciousness" and that "act purposefully" in and on the world by creating objects of "meaning" that are "expressions" of how human beings exist in the world (Van Manen 1990, 3-4).

Inherent within a human science orientation is the view that human phenomena cannot be studied adequately through the apparatus and procedures established in the natural sciences because the nature of investigation is of a different sort. Adoption of natural scientific conventions such as detached observation, precise quantitative measurement, and objectification of the subject allows only a limited view of human behavior, that is, a view based on those human characteristics and activities that are readily observable and measurable. Dilthey's notion of human science was intended to foster a richer knowledge of what it means to be human by searching beyond directly observable behavior to discover meanings embedded within human actions. A central tenet of human science is the recognition that our actions represent more than instinctual or habituated patterns or biological responses characteristic of other animals' interactions with their environments; implicit within human conduct are intentionality and meanings which are not accessible through observation but which can only be illuminated through a deeper inquiry into the things and events of the world to which we consciously attend. These intentions and meanings are not exposed on the surface of our actions but rather are buried deeply within, and so their uncovery and illumination require a strong commitment to strip away or unwrap the habitual routines and patterns of our actions in order to expose the inner kernel or nucleus, the essence of experience.

The research orientation of human science rests not on detached observation and measurement in a strictly controlled laboratory environment, but rather on description, interpretation, and understanding attained through careful attunement to our experiences in the world as we live them on an everyday basis. The human science laboratory is the world of everyday life experience, the *Lebenswelt* or the world of immediate experience as described by Husserl (1970). In other words, human science researchers are interested in the meanings which we give to the things and events which we encounter and create on a day-to-day basis in the world around us. In the inquiry into how we make sense out of our world (including ourselves) an essential feature of human science is a commitment to understanding "lived experience," that is, life as we live it in the "here" and "now" as opposed to some theoretical view of how life should be lived in accordance with a particular religious, political, economic, or philosophical tradition. Human science researchers refer to this disposition as a "pre-theoretical" or "pre-scientific attitude" (Husserl 1970) which implies a fidelity to life experience without the constraints or bonds of imposed intellectual or scientific theories.

As the study of meaning-making, human science research involves a form of inquiry intended to reveal and explicate the deep structures or the essence of human experience. Because of their hidden nature, meanings can only be uncovered through thoughtful description and interpretation of the actors' reflected experience. Human scientists, therefore, must employ a particular set of tools and techniques to mine the richness contained within experience; borrowing from sociology, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, and other areas of the social sciences and humanities, human scientists rely on approaches such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and semiotics to explicate meanings contained within life texts (Bogdan and Biklen 1982). "Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the 'texts' of life, and semiotics is used here to develop a practical writing or linguistic approach to the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics" (Van Manen 1990, 4). Life texts include stories, conversations, written accounts, and other forms of expression through which we recall and re-present experiences that hold particular meaning for us. And so we could characterize the mission of human science research as the explication of meanings drawn from human life texts.

This preoccupation with meaning is central to understanding the boundaries of human science, for at first glance we might assume that all sciences concerned with human study could be considered human science. Dilthey probably would have objected to such a notion, but more contemporary proponents, Stephen Strasser, for instance, make the distinction that while sciences such as medicine, anatomy, and physiology are not characterized by an abiding interest in the explication of human meanings, there exist numerous contact points (psychoanalysis or counselling, for example) between these sciences and the human sciences (Strasser 1974). For lack of a more articulate expression, we might refer dialectically to these branches as the non-human side of the human sciences. The point here is that human science represents not one science but a group of sciences, the boundaries of which are not clear-cut. But to think of human science as a discipline with precise boundaries would be to cast it somewhat out of character by defining it in positivist terms; more appropriately we should conceive of human science as a particular research attitude characterized by a deep concern for and an abiding interest in what it means to be human.

a human science view of vocational education

At first glance, human science research and vocational education may seem like strange bedfellows. With an apparent orientation to supporting national economic competitiveness through the development of a healthy labor market, that is, insuring an adequate supply of appropriately skilled workers to fill the needs of business and industry, it might appear that the field of vocational education would be better served by some form of economic inquiry or possibly a study aimed at more equitable social policy. Labor market studies replete with forecasts and projected trends abound in government offices; their predictions and recommendations on rising and falling employment rates are published regularly to alert vocational institutions and their funding agencies of the need to adjust to impending labor supply/demand changes. To limit the study of vocational education to supply and demand issues would be to acknowledge as its overarching mission a responsiveness to national or employer needs. It is unlikely that a human science orientation could provide much insight into the immediate development of more efficient labor market interventions; such undertakings should be left more appropriately to the economic and labor analysts. The question then, about the relevance of a human science research orientation to vocational education, begs further elaboration.

It is often accepted that the adoption of a research methodology should reflect the particular nature of the problem to be addressed. But human scientists would suggest that there is more to the choice of methodology than simply matching the tool to the job; based on our personal worldview or philosophical orientations, we have certain dispensations or affinities to particular research orientations (Jacknicke and Rowell 1987). Van Manen (1990) suggests a dialectical relationship between research problems and methodological preferences: we align ourselves with particular research orientations because they resonate with our personal worldviews, and on the basis of our worldviews we attune or become sensitized to particular problems. As suggested earlier, the motivation for this study stems from dissatisfaction and opposition to prevailing conceptions of vocational education as economic intervention as opposed to a more agogic view characterized by concern and responsibility for the vocational development of humans. Shifting from an economic or "human capital" view to one that more adequately embodies agogic interests involves reframing the problem and re-situating the researcher's orientation. If, as Kenneth Homan (1986) suggests, vocational development represents a quest for authenticity which in Heidegger's terms means the lifelong pursuit of what it means to be truly human, then researchers in vocational education must look beyond established economic traditions and recommit themselves to an agogic mission centered around guiding and supporting individuals in their quest for authentic existence (Homan 1986). In essence, this means the reconceptualization of vocational education as a way of helping people in their development as human "beings" as intentional, thinking, acting, and reflecting beings who can recognize the impersonality and dehumanization lodged within so many of our unquestioned cultural traditions and who can strip away the overburden of habitual practice to recover the deeper meanings of authentic existence. The traditions of human science research offer some avenues to this project of recovery.

phenomenological inquiry in human science research

In everyday usage we often think of phenomena as the occurrence of unique or spectacular events which are so out of the ordinary that they capture our attention and cause us to wonder about them. But phenomena need not be extraordinary or rare occurrences; they can be any situations, relationships, or events that happen in our everyday world and to which we have become so accustomed that we take little notice of them until something or someone draws them to our attention. Some natural scientists help us learn to recognize and understand phenomena in nature so that we will better appreciate both the marvels and the delicate balances of the natural world which are so easy to overlook in our day-to-day existence. These scientists' hope is that calling our attention to specific phenomena may lead us to wonder about them, possibly in mild curiosity or perhaps in a deeper and more committed way. Not limited to natural science, a phenomenon can be anything which reveals itself to our senses, that is, anything that can be experienced.

The term "phenomenology" can be interpreted as the science of phenomena (phenomen-ology). Contrary to what the preceding discussion may imply, it did not evolve as a branch of the natural sciences but rather, as a philosophical approach to inquiry into the "meanings of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan and Biklen 1982, 30). Phenomenology as a human science originated through the work of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1935), whose life work was the development and refinement of this approach to studying human life. His guiding belief was that to understand human phenomena we need to put aside our established views and assumptions and learn to "see" things as they present themselves in our experiences and to "describe" them in their own terms.

The growth and development of phenomenology as an approach to human science research reflects a rich and sometimes varied history of intellectual tradition with roots in German, Dutch, French, and more recently, North American academic circles. Although an extensive historic retracing of its development is not appropriate here, the extensive works of Spiegelberg (1982) and Strasser (1985) can provide adequate reference to the evolution of phenomenological inquiry as a mode of human science research. In addition to the historical perspectives provided, an important feature of both works is an attempt to overcome a common criticism of early phenomenological writings pertaining to the apparent absence or avoidance of an implicit research method. For instance, in the second volume of Spiegelberg's *The Phenomenological Movement* (1982), a general methodological sequence is outlined which involves locating a phenomenon of interest, capturing its common modes of appearance, bracketing out our everyday assumptions which previously had colored our views of the phenomenon, examining the phenomenon from various perspectives, describing the nucleus of structures essential to the phenomenon, and explicating the deep meaning structures which characterize the phenomenon.

Contemporary human scientists such as Giorgi, Fischer, and Murray (1975); Barritt, Beekman, and Mulderij (1983a and 1983b); Silverman (1984); Polakow (1984); and most recently Van Manen (1990) have contributed to the development of phenomenological research methodology with important considerations for its application in fields such as psychology and education. Of special significance to this study is the work of Max Van Manen; his recently published book *Researching Lived Experience* (1990) and his graduate course on phenomenological writing provide the central foundation for the conceptualization and conduct of this research undertaking. The following discussion of methodological structure represents an attempt to interpret his teachings as a conceptual framework for this study.

researching lived experience of vocational educators

Lived experience is our experience of "being" human in the day-to-day world. Coming to understand our lived experience is the human science way of coming to know ourselves and the world. Inquiry into lived experience involves reflecting on our everyday modes of being to strip away presuppositions, assumptions, and habits of ingrained practice to enable us to uncover the structures of those experiences which give meaning to our being human. It requires us to put aside taken for granted views and attitudes, and the prevailing theoretical notions of what experience is like in order to commit ourselves to a reflective and original inquiry into concrete human experience. To inquire into the lived experience of vocational educators is to ask, "What is it like to live life as a vocational educator?" "What is this experience like, and what gives it meaning?" "How is it different from other educational modes of being in the world?" What turns me to phenomenological inquiry is the commitment to a deeper understanding of what it means to "be" a vocational educator, an andragogue in a post secondary vocational institution, someone who stands in life with a commitment to helping others in their quest for vocation.

turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world

The notion of turning to a phenomenon of interest is to recognize something of importance to the particular way we stand in life. The beginning point of phenomenological inquiry is to recognize a phenomenon as an essential contributing feature to our mode of being in the world with the intent of mining its richness to better understand a particular dimension of our practice. By richness is meant a sensitivity or awareness that is deeper than our ordinary, common sense understandings of our experiences; here the richness is a richness in meaning that can nourish our competence as professional practitioners. But access to the deeper meanings is often clouded with prejudices and pre-understandings — the residue of habitual practice or cultural tradition. To gain a more original view of a phenomenon, previously established knowledge must be set aside or "bracketed," to use Husserl's term, so that the phenomenon can show itself on a clean page.

Turning our attention to a phenomenon is to isolate it and draw it to the forefront of our consciousness so that it stands out from the ordinary, like focusing a camera on a specific feature of a landscape; the rest of the scene remains in the viewfinder but the subject stands out in greater clarity. In some respects it means making the ordinary into the "extraordinary," creating within us a sense of wonder, not only about the thing itself but also about how it contributes to the larger scenario. Turning to a phenomenon is more than the stirring of some mild curiosity or half-interest which soon dissipates; creating a sense of wonder about something is to make it "problematic" so that it draws us like a magnet and holds us in a serious and committed way, preventing us from losing sight or wandering away from the search for meanings that lie within. To locate a phenomenon is to become committed to exploring concrete experience in such a way that the essential meanings are recovered and explicated to the extent that they evoke in others recollections and acknowledgement of meanings in their own experience. "This then is the task of phenomenological research and writing: to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (Van Manen 1990, 41).

Turning to the mode of existence as a vocational educator is to ask, in a serious way, "What is it like to experience life in this particular way?" "What does it mean to be a vocational educator?" "What is special or unique about this manner of being?" To embark on such an inquiry requires a deep interest, curiosity, and wondering about a particular way of standing in the world that appears to be rooted on one hand in an ethic of honest, hard work but on the other, cast in drab hues of blue collar existence.

To turn to a phenomenon of interest is not simply to find something which can catch our attention; it requires that the subject of interest is one which "commits us to the world." In other words, phenomenological researchers are not merely looking for questions that might be of interest in the quest for greater authenticity; they are captured by questions which must be opened up to reveal a particular way to more authentic human existence. In this study, the question of interest pertains to how we find meaning in what has come to be recognized as one of the most essential of human undertakings: work. More specifically, the question is directed towards our established practices of preparing people to assume a life of work. The phenomenon to be investigated is the practice of vocational education as conducted in postsecondary vocational institutions; the subjects of the study are veteran vocational educators, or more specifically, trades instructors. If the meaning of vocational education is apparent anywhere, it must surely reside within the practice of those who are charged with the responsibility of developing a sense of vocation in others. The project of this study is to engage vocational educators in a dialogue with the aim of revealing those aspects of their practice through which the lived meanings of vocation can be analyzed, interpreted, and hopefully understood in a deeper and more thoughtful manner.

investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it

As discussed earlier in this study, a number of views about the nature and purpose of vocational education have been articulated. Some, such as the economic views, express a singular, instrumental purpose which casts the mission of vocational education as one of shoring up the fragilities of the continually evolving, problem-ridden labor market (Weir 1987). Others attempt to paint a multifaceted role which embraces both larger societal concerns as well as individual developmental needs (Rehm 1989; Weir 1987), but despite these more contemporary attempts to produce compromising liberal-conservative ideological mixes, the overbearing shades of labor market concerns seem to persistently show through. The debate around contradicting views of the purpose of vocational education is often distilled into the oversimplified "liberal education versus occupational training" argument with proponents of the former calling for a stronger alignment with classical liberal studies and the latter defending a subservient position to labor market demands (Evans 1981).

As in the case of general education at both elementary and secondary school levels, it would be probably naive to assume that a singular dominant view of vocational education's mission would ever emerge as a consensus of public thought; alternatively, to resign ourselves to the competing views reflective of current ideologies would offer little insight into recovering the notion of "vocation" as something beyond the narrow confines of occupational training. Inherent within the human science traditions adopted as the foundation for this study is a commitment to the primacy of the lifeworld. As Giorgi explains, "By the 'lifeworld' phenomenologists mean the everyday world as it is lived by all of us prior to explanations and theoretical interpretations of any kind" (1975, 99). To understand a phenomenon, then, in a human science way requires going back to our lived experience and examining it in a deep and thoughtful manner to explicate the essential meanings that reside there before the interpretation of various theoretical orientations. From a human science perspective, the problem with existing theoretical views of vocational education is that they emanate from economic, political, and other cultural traditions as opposed to concerns for individual human beings in their quest for authentic existence (Homan 1986). In other words, existing views of vocational education are characterized more by larger economic interests, reflected in terms like "human resource development" and "human capital" than by agogical concerns which surface in our practice as vocational educators. To facilitate a deeper and more original dialogue, prevailing conceptions such as blue collar status, low-to-moderate skill levels, and economic motives commonly associated with "vocational" life must be bracketed or temporarily suspended to make room for pre-theoretic expressions of everyday experience.

To move towards the development of a more agogically-rooted understanding of vocational education requires a return to the lifeworld of people who experience life on a day-to-day basis as vocational educators, for it is within their practice as opposed to that of economists or governmental policy-makers that lie the deep and essential meanings that give shape to an agogic way of standing in the world. The researchers' avenue to lived experience is through descriptive accounts of people who recall relevant past experiences or their own stories that were of significance to a particular way of being in the world. The researchers' goal is to adopt and reflectively re-live these stories in search of meanings that are at the center of the recounted experiences — what phenomenologists refer to as intersubjective meanings — the universal character of human experience (Van Manen 1990, 53). Through a disciplined attentiveness to the recounting and reflecting on lived experience one can gain insights into practice that reveal deeper meanings without the overburden of theoretical interpretations.

One of the more challenging aspects in phenomenological inquiry is to create a vehicle through which the meaning structures of lived experience can be revealed. These meanings are embedded in everyday experience yet they are not necessarily obvious to either the subjects or the researcher. As Becker (1978) indicates, they are hard to speak about; we generally cannot hope to explicate meanings simply by asking subjects for them because without painstaking reflection on a phenomenon it is likely that only common-sense explanations of habitual practice will emerge. But since meanings reside in experience, what the phenomenological researcher has to work with are descriptive accounts of personally meaningful experiences in written, oral, graphic or some other expressive form. One commonly used approach for soliciting experiential accounts is the dialogical interview through which the researcher attempts to draw out recollections from subjects. This interview process is considered dialogical because the researcher enters a conversation with the subjects, probing for increasing experiential detail in efforts to "share" the recounted experiences and analyze them from the inside, as it were. A central concern of the researcher is to persistently guide the subjects' reflections away from opinions, abstractions, or theoretical explanations and back to the articulation of concrete experience, what Husserl (1970) expressed as *Zu den Sachen* — "back to the things themselves."

The focus of this study is on the lived experiences of middle-aged men and women who have spent much of their working lives as practicing vocational educators in postsecondary educational institutions in western Canada. These interview subjects or research partners were selected because of the salience of their experience in the field of vocational education. While none of these participants began their careers as educators, they no longer see themselves today solely as craftspersons or artisans but as vocational educators. They share the experience of having spent a major portion of their adult lives (roughly a decade) working at their chosen trade or craft, in all cases reaching senior or advanced status in their field before making a mid-career transition to a role in vocational education where, to date, they have spent at least another decade. In each case, they have served as institutional instructors. Their stories contain insights into their vocational development, their experiences as workers in their chosen fields (the trades), and finally as adult educators.

The texts which provide the data for this study were collected through a series of individual interviews with the research participants over a twelve-month period (April '91 to March '92). The interviews, which were very informal and unstructured in nature, were intended to help the participants reflect on particular aspects of their experience as adult vocational educators and elucidate them as personal stories. The first interview with each participant was structured around the general topic of "deciding to become a vocational educator," the intent of which was to develop some background for each of the participants' stories. The decision to become a vocational educator was deemed an appropriate beginning point for participant stories since it represented a conscious shift or transformation in the way the individuals chose to stand in life.

As a framework for subsequent interviews, Joseph Schwab's (1969) four "commonplaces" of education were used as guiding topics. Schwab maintains that in curriculum discourses and deliberations there are four recurring themes which he calls the commonplaces of education: teachers, students, subject matter, and milieux (or context). In other words, he suggests that curriculum discussions typically center around teachers and students, recognizing of course that their roles may vary considerably from situation to situation, even being reversed at times. In addition, curriculum discussions are "about" some content or subject matter that provides the medium for interaction between teachers and students, and each curricular situation resides within some milieux or context which influences the other three factors or commonplaces.

The intent here was not to engage in rigorous inquiry into curriculum matters *per se*, but rather, to employ Schwab's framework of commonplaces as a starting point in eliciting stories that pertain to the life experiences of vocational educators. The notion of adopting Schwab's commonplaces as an initial framework for explicating themes in educational research was drawn from the work of Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (1988, 92-95) who used this approach in identifying "thematic concerns" in action research undertakings. The preliminary results of this research were a collection of interview transcripts containing narrative accounts or stories of participant experiences (samples of the interview transcripts are contained in Appendix 'A').

reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon

Descriptive experiential accounts as contained in the aforementioned interview transcripts represent the "raw data" of phenomenological researchers;

the primary importance of these texts is that they provide a vessel in which to convey personal experience. While the texts themselves can be valued for their personal or historical significance, phenomenological researchers are interested in the deeper meaning structures underlying the narrative accounts. To be satisfied with the face value of individual accounts would be to settle for a collection of personal perceptions, and while perceptual inventories may hold some interest for human science researchers, they do not necessarily reveal essential meanings of experience. Interview transcripts and other similar texts, as raw materials, must be processed or refined by the researcher to extract the embedded richness through a process of thematic analysis.

The concept of "theme" in phenomenological inquiry is similar to its application in the interpretation of literary works. Through hermeneutic dialogue with the discourse of the text, attempts are made to locate and interpret dominant themes in much the same manner that literary scholars use when trying to understand the complexities of an author's work. By understanding themes within a text, phenomenological researchers are able to isolate and distill the intention of the storyteller into a dense and powerful nucleus which can be seen as the foundation and structure of a concrete human experience. A theme can be viewed as the heart of the narrative; it connects and sustains all parts of a story. When we come face to face with the theme(s) we begin to understand what gives meaning to an experience not only for the storyteller but for others who can see this particular experience as a possible experience of their own. Through thematic analysis we gain access to the intersubjectivity of human conduct.

Van Manen (1990, 92-95) discusses three common approaches for identifying themes within texts: the holistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the detailed or line-by-line approach. In the holistic or sententious approach the researcher endeavors to apprehend the central meaning of the text with an expression that portrays what appears to be the essence or inner kernel of the entire recounted experience. This approach is considered to be holistic in that the researcher must consider the whole experience without getting sidetracked or becoming preoccupied with any of the internal details of the text. In the selective or highlighting approach the researcher usually has to read and reread the text a number of times searching for expressions that seem to shed light on the essential nature of the experience like a criminal investigator searching the scene of a crime for clues. When identified, these fragments are tagged (highlighted) for further examination and analysis. In the detailed or line-by-line approach every line or sentence of the text is analyzed for its potential contribution to the search for textual meaning.

The primary approach to identifying themes in the interview transcripts in this study was the selective or highlighting approach. Since the interviews were conducted with a minimum of imposed structure, research participants were invited to exercise considerable freedom in talking about their experiences which, understandably, offered opportunities for them to include, at times, somewhat extraneous accounts. By using the selective approach the less relevant parts of the narratives were allowed to settle into the background of the dialogue once the more essential expressions were highlighted and brought to the foreground. These highlighted segments which "stood out" and which were subsequently brought to the foreground became for me the key portions of the text. Like the results of a distillation or refinement process, the highlighted passages represent what was retained at the end of the screening process, after everything else was allowed to settle into the background. These dense portions of text were finally collected, extracted, and then reassembled as discrete stories. As a second "filtering" of the texts, the transcripts were reviewed on a line-by-line basis to validate the appropriateness of the earlier highlighting, that is, each sentence was assessed individually for its relevance to the meaning of the central experience discussed.

While the highlighted portions of the text stand out in their relevance to the meaning of the particular experience under discussion, they often do not have the explicit appearance of a theme, but rather, merely hint at or point to a possible theme. The challenge for the phenomenological researcher is to translate or rephrase the storytellers' key words into expressions which transcend the specific context of the individual storyteller and thereby represent the possible experience of others. The restating or reformulating of highlighted texts as themes shows the readers how the storyteller's statements were recast in phenomenological terms by the researcher. (For an example of a highlighted interview text and an extracted story along with the themes which were identified within it, refer to Appendix 'A.')

A final consideration in the process of thematic analysis is making a distinction between incidental and essential themes. Van Manen (1990, 106) suggests that effecting this separation is the most difficult and controversial element of phenomenological research. The process which phenomenologists employ to this end is referred to as "free variation" or "free imaginative variation." It requires the researcher to ask whether or not the phenomenon remains essentially unchanged with or without the theme in question. In other words, is a particular theme essential to our understanding of an experience or would the experience be virtually the same without it? Can we imagine the experience without the theme? To uncover the essential themes is to settle upon the intersubjective meanings of experience — the meanings which give structure to a particular experience or a specific way of being in the world.

In this study, the explication of incidental and essential themes pertains to the question of what it means to be a vocational educator. It should be expected that vocational educators would share a number of values and practices commonly held by other educators and that some of the themes emerging from their stories would be consistent with those of other educators. These, however, are considered as incidental themes in this study, and although they may illustrate a common agogic grounding among educators, they do not distinguish vocational education as a unique and special form of practice. The essential themes are those which show what it means to stand in life as a vocational educator, as someone committed to the vocational development of others; they are the genes which carry and determine the attributes of the practice.

describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting

In the established research traditions of the natural sciences, we generally think about the act of writing as the process of recording the findings of an investigation and documenting the methodologies employed to arrive at them. In this light, writing is often viewed as the final operation in the research process, largely occurring at the conclusion of the inquiry like a bookkeeping activity to provide a formal record for the research community. In the human science traditions, particularly in phenomenological inquiry, the process of writing plays a more integral part not only in the concluding phases but in all aspects of the research methodology; in fact, to some phenomenological researchers writing and research are considered so closely related as to be almost synonymous (Van Manen 1990, 1984, Barritt et al 1983b). As Van Manen expresses, "to do research in a phenomenological sense is already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something. And this bringing to speech is most commonly a writing activity" (1984, 41).

In phenomenological terms, "bringing to speech" implies raising to consciousness and making explicit essential meanings which heretofore have gone unnoticed or unattended in particular ways of being in the world. The phenomenological approach to uncovering meanings is attained through sensitive attunement to everyday language. As Salner (1986, 121) says, "The human science researcher is awash in language . . . the fundamental 'stuff' with which the human science researcher works." Consistent with hermeneutic traditions in which interpretation is viewed as an essential avenue for the development of human knowledge, phenomenological researchers are concerned with the interpretation of language texts as a facility through which human experience can be captured and carefully rotated to offer multiple views of a phenomenon. What makes writing such an integral part of phenomenological inquiry is that the researcher not only "listens" to the language of the texts (usually written transcriptions) but also, through the act of interpretation, creates new texts which ultimately speak in clearer and more fundamental terms about the essential nature of the phenomenon.

At first glance interpretive writing might appear as a simple, straightforward translation of the storyteller's themes into meanings, but such an instrumental approach would fall short of the phenomenological mission of explicating essential meaning structures that transcend a single individual's subject experience with a phenomenon. Instead, the phenomenological researcher must engage in a hermeneutic dialogue with the text, questioning it and probing deeper and deeper, examining it from different angles in attempts to explicate the residual meaning structures that show themselves persistently. It is through the act of writing and rewriting that the researcher "experiments", in a hermeneutic sense, with free imaginative variation by questioning a phenomenon from different perspectives, asking if the phenomenon would be the same if this or that feature were taken away, added or changed. The researcher tries to capture this imaginative factoring through written dialogues characterized by a hermeneutic give-and-take with the text, playful inversions and transpositions of taken-for-granted meanings, and the retracing and recovery of original or lost meanings. The phenomenological researcher endeavors to test any potentially newfound meaning by applying it to a variety examples in everyday life occurrences, checking to see if the phenomenon in question changes in its essential meaning structure — a practice that has led phenomenology to be known as "the science of examples."

To do phenomenological research is to engage in writing and rewriting. To develop the sensitivity necessary to probe to the heart of a phenomenon requires a deep commitment, almost a preoccupation, with a particular mode of being. The sensitivity develops by going back to the occurrence of the phenomenon again and again in search of the subtle interpretive differences that show themselves through the imaginative variations. Each return to the phenomenon in question or each little explicative sidetrip in pursuit of an interesting example involves another iteration of the written dialogue with the text, another attempt to evolve a clearer, more precise, more meaningful expression of experience. As Reason and Hawkins (1988, 80) state,

> Expression is the mode of allowing the meaning of experience to become manifest. It requires the inquirer to partake deeply of the experience, rather than stand back in order to analyze. Meaning is part and parcel of all experience, although it may be so interwoven with that experience that it is hidden; it needs to be discovered, created, or made manifest, and communicated. When we partake of life we create meaning; the purpose of life is meaning making.

The act of writing and rewriting for the phenomenological researcher is to create expression in which meaning is made manifest, or as Heidgegger explains in his concept of *Lichtung*, it is the provision of a clearing or empty space which becomes a vessel in which the meaning can take form and grow (Reason and Hawkins 1988, 81). Expressed another way, the phenomenological researcher's task in "listening" to life stories is to apprehend the fundamental meanings by creating new stories which make explicit what was previously implicit.

storytelling as human science inquiry

To researchers committed to natural science traditions, stories and storytelling may appear as strange and unlikely devices through which to approach the development of knowledge. The notion of using stories as a research tool seems completely out of context with accepted scientific conventions of objective observation, precise measurement, and replication which are considered necessary to arrive at effective means of prediction and control. But to human scientists, with their preoccupation with understanding the human condition, (i.e., the meaning of lived experience), stories constitute the ideal medium for the expression of what it means to be human. As Von Eckhartsberg (1981, 90) states, " Human meaning making rests in stories. Life making calls for accounts, for story, for sharing. To be human is to be entangled in stories." Creating stories is how we make sense out of our individual and collective existence (Keleman 1987).

To reflect on life is to recall stories, that is, to recover and bring to voice narrative accounts of our lived experience. Through the medium of stories we give form and substance to our experience, and through telling and re-telling of stories we capture and refine the inherent meanings of our experience; similarly, through listening to stories of others we are able to share vicariously their experiences and become more experienced ourselves. Storytelling is a human way of preserving past experience, explaining current dispositions, and speculating about the future. To employ stories as a research medium is to study "how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (Connelly and Clandinin 1988, 24-25).

In discussing the use of stories in human science inquiry, C. West Churchman (1971, 178) questions in a rhetorical sense if dealing with stories can be considered science. Can knowledge be developed through the study of stories? To the human science researcher, the answer is a resounding "yes." Ian Mitroff helps situate this issue within a research context:

> This does not mean that any story qualifies as science but that science consists of taking stories seriously. The best stories are those which stir people's hearts and souls and by so doing give them new insights into themselves, their problems and their human condition. The challenge is to develop a human science that more fully serves this aim. The question then is not, 'Is storytelling science?' but 'Can science learn to tell good stories?' (Mitroff 1978, 92-93).

The methodological orientation of this study is grounded in the lived experiences of vocational educators as portrayed in their individual stories. Shared through personal interviews, these stories provide the *Lichtung* in which experiences can take shape, thereby exposing the meaning structures that hold them together and give them form. The intent of the study was conceived as something more than simply finding good stories describing the practice of vocational education; rather, the mission of the inquiry was to collect stories that contain reflections on concrete experience of vocational educators which offer insights necessary to understanding, from the past, present, and future, this particular way of standing in life.

Through careful and thoughtful "listening" to the stories, readers are invited to share the life stories of the participants and to ponder the implications which the inherent meanings may hold for their own practice. As Keleman (1987, 51) indicates, "Stories not only describe present life situations, they help us rehearse future actions." It is with this orientation to the future that the stories in this study are presented; the instructive value in listening to the stories is to approach a better understanding of the practice of vocational education and to more effectively tap its potential in future efforts to bring about an improved human condition.

In the process of reviewing the interview transcripts developed in this study, attention was directed to the search for portions of text which appeared to convey, in themselves, significant accounts of the storytellers' experiences. These selections were drawn out of the larger interview text and presented as participant stories under five topics: 1) stories about vocational choice; 2) stories about vocational development; 3) stories about agogic development; 4) stories about agogic relationships; and 5) stories about teaching as a vocation. Chapters four through eight are dedicated to the re-telling of these stories along with a hermeneutic discussion of their salient themes.

CHAPTER 4:
STORIES ABOUT VOCATIONAL CHOICE

The two stories presented in this chapter pertain to the matter of vocational choice, the most fitting place, perhaps, to begin an inquiry into meanings of vocation and vocational education. There has been a good deal of attention focused on vocational choice over the past few decades, and a variety of models and theories have been proffered in attempts to explain the psychological and sociological factors or forces that influence how we, as adults, make personal choices in a matter that affects so much of our lives. Elaboration of these theories is left to those in the field of vocational counselling; my intent here is to examine the stories of how the initial decision to enter a particular trade was made by two young adults who, at the time, had no idea that some years later they would find themselves helping others follow them into their respective trades. The examination of these stories is aimed at uncovering possible themes which give meaning to the experiences conveyed by the storytellers and which contribute to a better understanding of what it means to choose a career in the trades. My final question in the analysis of these stories (as well as those presented in the following chapters) pertains to the possibilities they appear to offer in understanding a life in the trades as a vocation.

The two stories that follow are very different from each other but although there are a number of distinctions that can be drawn between the two situations, both stories speak in subtle ways to some of the underlying themes concerning what it means to pursue a trade as a vocation.

Bruce's story about following a family tradition

Bruce is a senior instructor in a plumbing and pipefitting program in a large urban community college where he has worked for over twenty years. In this story Bruce describes an almost stereotypical situation in which as a young adult, he pursues an established family tradition by following his father and his uncle into the plumbing trade and then into the family-owned business. He talks about how he came to make his initial career decision and what it was like to be an apprenticing plumber back in the fifties and sixties, before the introduction of many of the current trade practices and materials. Bruce's story concludes with an interesting twist as he leaves the account of his own vocational decisions to comment on the next generation as represented by his son.

> *My father was also in the plumbing trade, as is my son and my brother. So it's a family occupation. And that's something that I find is quite common with the students I'm teaching today. I am teaching sons or nephews of former students. It's not just in this trade, it happens in others as well. With a lot of people, it seems to run in families. So I grew up knowing my dad as a tradesman, as a plumber.. Now he ended up owning the shop where I ended up working, which is a story further on in the future. I ended up running the shop that he started.*
>
> *I liked working with my hands, and it doesn't bother me as it possibly would some other people to work at the trades. I mean some people want to be white collar workers, or like my younger brother who ended up being a plumber, he started out being a banker. He didn't want to work with his hands and getting his*

fingers dirty. But that didn't seem to bother me, so in the summer I got out of high school I visited several electrical contractors; nobody was hiring at the moment, and so that summer I went to work as a plumber's helper. So, you know, unable to find electrical work, I sort of fell into the plumbing trade, not that I was adverse to it. I would have rather been an electrician.

I spent my summers either working on a crew or in a little shop we had up north, so I would go up there and work as a laborer or just a helper. Now we're talking back in the fifties and very early sixties. There was no plastic pipe. As a matter of fact, I was almost a journeyman, believe it or not, before copper pipe came in. So it was all threaded joints and lead locum, cast iron soil pipe, you know, sewer-type joints, so it wasn't all a bed of roses as it is now. I know there's lots of heavy work and lots of physical stuff, but back in those days, the materials were old fashioned and heavy, and everything was done by hand. Especially up at our northern shop in the summers when I was a kid, I developed a pretty good set of muscles. It was brutal, actually! And it was really slow!

Generally speaking, back in those days, it was one journeyman, one apprentice, and you more or less learned off that one guy. The main guy I worked with, his name was Sandy Forester, a little Scotsman from overseas, an old fashioned, typical City and Guilds craftsman, very meticulous and very picky about neatness and that. You learned really good habits. But then our whole shop was that way. We didn't take any short cuts or give anybody a shoddy job. Everything was straight, clean, and tight. Everything was ninety degree angles. All your joints were wiped *clean. You know nowadays, you go down in the basement and look at some people's plumbing and there are gobs of solder hanging everywhere because it's rush, rush, rush. "Get that done in the minimum time or you go look for another job!"*

Back in those days it was slow slugging and neatness counted. Workmanship and dependability really counted a lot. And, I was very fortunate, just off-hand to think of it, the three main journeymen that I worked under: each and every one of them were, you might say, the old-time tradesmen, very proud of their work and they treated their help well. You know, that's a common complaint that I get from the students nowadays, "Oh, the journeyman that I work with, he won't even let me look at the blueprint. They tell me to shut up and cut the pipes, or whatever."

The guys I worked with, they trained you along the way, the way it's supposed to be. They showed you, they corrected you, they checked you. and occasionally they might even compliment you. So I did learn a lot from them and I hope I turned out like them. I worked with a variety of chaps, and most of them were quite proud of their trade. I've never really run across anybody that was ashamed of being a plumber or working with their hands. These guys were actually quite dedicated. And as I say, they treated you well and they taught you.

About my son, I must say that I'm surprised he's gone this way too. Well, like myself, if I remember back in those days, it was almost ten years ago when he got out of high school, like his dad, although like I said, we come from a family of plumbers, he really didn't have it in mind to be one too. I know he worked for a year at *various odd jobs. It was his second summer out of school, I remember him finally coming to me and saying, "Dad, I think I might want to be a plumber like you and uncle and Grandpa" and I'm saying, "Are you sure?"*

He was strong enough, smart enough; I knew he'd probably have the aptitude for it, and I said, "Sure," but really, I wasn't all that happy. I don't know. I keep saying that there's nothing wrong with being a plumber. But I wasn't all that happy with my son having aspirations about being one. Here again, you always hope your kid's going to be an eminent brain surgeon or something, although he had indicated earlier that grade twelve was going to be it. He was a little bit tired of it, in fact all three of my kids, I'm a little bit dismayed, once they got out of grade twelve, they wanted to get their grade twelve, they really didn't want any more education as far as university or schooling or whatever. Much to my dismay. They all said that they'd had enough!

a hermeneutic reading of Bruce's story

In this story we find ourselves sharing a situation with a young man, Bruce, who has just completed high school and has turned his attention towards a new chapter in his life — starting a career. This is a situation that vocational educators at the postsecondary level have come to recognize as a familiar one, a critical juncture that marks the transition point where "school kids" come of age and the rites of passage involve a re-directing of interests to the serious, adult affairs of the workplace. In this instance, the young man chooses an avenue that is quite familiar to him — his father had spent his life in the trade and so the image of a tradesman, a plumber, had been present throughout childhood and adolescence. There is a slight touch of endearment in his acknowledgement, *It seems to run in the family. I grew up knowing my dad as a plumber*, although he is quick to add that his father was also more than a plumber; he was a business owner as well. And might it be possible that this notion of "being a plumber but also more than a plumber" also runs in the family? Might the storyteller have learned, as a youth, that there is more than one way of being a plumber?

As Bruce begins to elaborate on his career choice, he turns almost immediately to hint at a concern with status that is associated with his trade (and possibly with all trades today). We see it immediately in the comment, *I liked working with my hands, and it doesn't bother me as it possibly would some other people . . .* We can read in this statement an admission something like, "Yes, I do take the odd cigarette," even though we are aware of the growing public sentiment against the practice. His comment has the tone of an admission as when we know that we've chosen an unpopular route to which we expect others to show disdain or dismay. But at the same time, the comment conveys a certain pride that cannot be altogether dampened by the opposition of popular view. It is a pride that emanates from having the courage and maybe the stamina to choose and persevere through a course that appears to run counter to prevailing social trends. It is also a pride that stems from an unwavering commitment to perfection in practice and high quality products. In this pride is reflected an old-fashioned ethic of the self-made man who started at the bottom performing the back-breaking tasks of a laborer or helper, and it harkens to a time pre-dating modern technological convenience when a career in the trades was recalled as anything but *a bed of roses.*

Also reflective of earlier (simpler) times are the recollected approaches to learning the trade. The time-honored relationship between the seasoned craftsman and his apprentice is brought to life in this story in a manner that leaves little doubt concerning its value to the storyteller. While the traditional "one journeyman — one apprentice" relationship may be considered by some as a rather dated conception of vocational development, particularly in light of the North American trend towards school-based programing, the tradesman's experiences of mentorship under the sharp eye of an old-world craftsman was obviously treasured. Old fashioned or not, there was a definite sense of developing pride and respect for standards of work that were beyond compromise in contrast to today's shoddy practices where quality is often sacrificed for profit margins.

In many respects, Bruce's recounting of his apprenticeship experiences reveals his concerns with contemporary schemes of vocational development, even though he instructs in the plumbing program of a large community college. The close supervision in the old one-to-one mentorship arrangements insured a concern for neatness, caring, and other valued work habits, but these values seem to count less in the transition to present day training arrangements where a concern for *maximum output in the minimum time* appear to take precedence. Those ideals of earlier times are obviously cherished by Bruce who considers himself fortunate to have learned under the tutelage of three "old-world" journeymen, all of whom approached their craft with seriousness, responsibility, and care.

We are left with the impression that pride and respect for the trade was a guiding force in the journeyman-apprentice relationship which, to Bruce, represented the proper order of things, *they trained you along the way, the way it's supposed to be.* There is an unmistakable sense that nurturing others, in this context, represented an integral part of one's vocation; to be a craftsman means not only gaining one's livelihood in the trade but also maintaining the stature of the trade through the upholding of qualities and traditions through the induction of new entrants to the field. Through this view we can develop at least a partial perspective on a distinction between occupation and vocation. Interestingly, as Bruce concludes his recollections concerning the personal nature of the investment made by the old-style journeyman with their uncompromising standards and persistently high expectations, the story turns again to the issue of pride: *I worked with a variety of chaps* [journeymen], *and most of them were quite proud of their trade. I've never really run across anybody that was ashamed of being a tradesman or working with their hands. These guys were actually quite dedicated.*

This sense of pride is obviously important to Bruce; it deserved underlining, first in a positive vein (they were quite proud of their trade) and then in a negative reiteration (none of them were ashamed of being tradesmen or working with their hands). What is the significance of pride in this story but also in the broader exploration of vocation? One response could be in regards to the backgrounds of the European tradesmen who played such a prominent role in the early development of the trades in this country. When we think of the "golden age" of crafts and its many cherished attributes such as workmanship, dependability, artistry, and uniqueness, do we not generally associate them with European or other old-world artisans? Or when we want a special job done on a valuable heirloom, or when we want a custom-built item that reflects more of our personal taste and character than is possible through today's mass production approaches, isn't there a tendency to search out a European or Asian tradesman? One of the factors inherent in the comparison of today's tradespeople with those of earlier times or those from older traditions is this very notion of pride and its resultant qualities reflected in workmanship and work products.

To go back to Bruce and his story, the pride evident among the European journeymen was impressive, and Bruce's voice conveys a hint that this pride was infectious — if you were fortunate enough to train with these proud artisans, some of their pride would rub off on you too. But at the same time his comments suggest that there might be counter-sentiments that would question the depth or legitimacy of a tradesman's pride. The romanticized ideals of the crafts era seem to have weathered somewhat in the face of modern industrialization and high-tech development. Is there a hint that the sense of pride evident among the older tradesmen may not be all that widely shared today and that working with one's hands may instead be viewed as a source of shame?

The issue of pride and shame surfaces once more as Bruce refers to his son's ultimate decision to take up the plumbing trade. There is obviously something heart-warming in having our children decide to follow in our footsteps, for it reflects a certain faith or admiration in examples set by our own lives. It represents such a direct form of generativity or regeneration that some sense of reward is unavoidable. But do we want our children to follow us in everything we do? Bruce cannot veil the disappointment and doubt in his comment, *I said 'sure', but really, I wasn't all that happy. I don't know. I keep saying that there's nothing wrong with being a tradesman. But I wasn't all that happy with my son having aspirations about being one.* Bruce is caught questioning the established position which maintains that there is nothing wrong with being a tradesman, a position that should be expected of anyone whose vocation consists of encouraging and supporting others in following their particular way of life (as tradesmen). But when the son, after some consideration, adopts this same position, the disappointment in Bruce's voice reflects the doubt or possibly the contradiction in his own rhetoric: *I keep* *saying there's nothing wrong with being a tradesman,* *but* . . . when it came to his own son, he hoped for something more — if only jokingly, a brain surgeon.

From this story, some important questions can be drawn which may contribute to a deeper understanding of what it means to choose a career in the trades. For instance, what is it that distinguishes or characterizes a trades career? What does it mean in this day and age to be a tradesperson? What does such a career choice have to do with personal identity? And for people who choose to work at a trade, how are their possibilities of experiencing their work as vocation affected? Analysis of the preceding story offers some insights into these questions, but before continuing this discussion, another person's story about choosing a career in the trades is presented.

Allison's story about arts and trades

In this second story, Allison recounts the dilemma she faced as a young woman contemplating her future career path. In contrast to Bruce in the first story, Allison was less influenced by family traditions and local employment opportunities; instead, she confronted a number of ideological issues concerning what it meant to enter a career in the trades as opposed to choosing what might generally be conceived as a more artistic form of endeavor. The purpose in turning to this second story is to approach the issue of selecting a trades career from a somewhat different perspective. Following the presentation and the hermeneutic reading of the second story, the chapter is concluded with further discussion of themes drawn from both stories.

> *I finished a two-year diploma in my craft in a small community college. I always really enjoyed the arts but I'm not essentially creative. I mean I think I'm creative enough, but it's not necessarily my creativity that gives meaning to my work and my*

life. Like my style of creation is to create something out of something else, but I'm not an original initiator of whatever. And so even though I really like the arts, I didn't ever feel a calling to be an artist, so the choice to go into a craft like printing seemed like a really good blending, because I have always been a highly productive and fairly organized individual and I do enjoy artistry. And it meant that I would be situated next to the arts or related to the arts; I would learn a lot about them, but I wouldn't actually have to be a producer, in an artistic sense. I actually specialized in fine craft because I preferred that community over the straight fine arts community. And that's what took me into the printing industry.

At the time that I made the initial career choice, I was just so sick of school that I decided I didn't want to go into a four-year degree program or a six-years of university or whatever. Well, when I finally made the choice about fine crafts, it was actually kind of interesting because it was the first time in my life that I felt like I fit somewhere. Like there were people there who thought and acted the same way I did, which was wonderful! Because all through high school, I was just this misfit kind of person.

I found myself getting deeper and deeper immersed in the printing craft and in the crafts community because the longer I was in it, the more I really didn't like the fine arts community. It didn't take me long to realize that I'd chosen the right direction! They [the artists] were just too pretentious! And the craft people were far more down to earth. The crafts people were far more, far more willing to accept change, in a way. The community wasn't as staid. It wasn't as grounded in history, and they didn't place as much *emphasis on university degrees and things like that. They were more interested in experience.*

And in the arts you have this pretension! I would listen to people critique work that I had been with when it was created, and they'd be reading all of this shit into it that wasn't there, stuff the artist hadn't intended, and I just got really fed up with that. Whereas with crafts, the concern was more with the technical expertise that went into the piece and its functionality as well as the creative imagination that went into it.

This is something that I really fight to retain in our program at the college — the balance between technical expertise, on one hand, and artistry or aesthetics and creativity, on the other. While in our industry they refer to this job (printing) as a "trade," I openly refuse to call it that, and always insist on calling it a "craft." Earlier in our conversation you used the word "artisan." I like that, as well as the term "craftsperson." The trouble with so many of the trades is that they have been stripped of anything artistic or creative, and they've become purely technical. What is creative about a technician? Fortunately, we still have some of the old European craftspeople around, but in the printing industry, the developing technology has pretty well closed the door to them. There's no question that advisory committees and in many ways the employers have pushed a lot of trades in this direction. I think we have to fight it, and I don't care what people on the advisory committees say. People who come out of this program know the distinction between a craftsperson and a technician!

a hermeneutic reading of Allison's story

Unlike the first story in which Bruce relates much of the context of his career choice to familial influences and traditions, Allison begins her narrative from a more personal perspective, that is, from an observation about her own personal qualities. She describes her choice of a crafts program on the basis of a personal assessment of her perceived lack of creativity: *I always really enjoyed the arts, but I'm not essentially creative.* Her interests obviously center around the arts, and readers can hardly ignore a tone in her discourse that suggests a sense of disappointment in her feeling that she doesn't quite measure up to a career as an artist. Allison's practical-mindedness seems to divert her focus away from an artistic pursuit, as if reminding herself, "I am what I am; I may be somewhat creative but I am also highly productive and organized."

Facing the dilemma of being attracted to the arts but at the same time feeling inadequate in becoming an artist, Allison strikes a compromise: if she can't be an artist, then she will take the next-best (or possibly the best) choice — a career in fine craft. An alternative interpretation might be that it is unfair to consider this choice a compromise; rather, choosing a craft may well represent a careful weighing of talents and interests against the perceived requirements of the two career options. She indicates, *the choice to go into a craft like printing seemed like a really good blending*; it afforded an opportunity to combine a strong personal interest (the arts) with her talents (productivity and organization). So, to some extent, what may be considered a compromise may also be understood as a combination of the best of all possible worlds — to be situated next to the arts but working in a more practical or functional manner while still maintaining a concern for aesthetic-expressive ways of being.

Reflecting on her decision as a young woman to pursue what she refers to as "a fine craft," Allison shifts her attention from the nature of work to the nature of the people who characterize the two fields — arts and crafts. Her conversation turns to "community" as a way of capturing a fuller description of what we could be called the culture of these two fields. Use of the term "community" in this context has a definite facility in that it invites the analogy of choosing a particular community in which to live, as when one moves to a new city. In either case, the choice of community involves much more than practical considerations such as location, proximity to the workplace or schools, and price, but also more cultural factors such as ethnic make-up, lifestyle, and numerous other socioeconomic features. Allison has obviously given some thought to the kind of vocational neighborhood in which she would prefer to live.

In the process of choosing her vocational community, Allison has also reflected on what it would take to for her to gain access to the neighborhood of her choice. She indicates, *I was sick of school* and *I didn't want to go into a four-year degree program or six years of university or whatever*, the same attitude reflected in the first story by Bruce when he was recounting the experiences of his children, *they all said they'd had enough* [formal schooling]. In some ways, this attitude shows the choice of vocations as influenced at least to some extent by what it would require of the individual to get there in terms of formal preparation. But after having made the initial choice, Allison's decision is confirmed when she realizes how well she fits within her chosen community. *It was the first time in my life that I felt like I fit somewhere. Like there were people there who thought and acted the same way I did, which was wonderful!* There is both surprise and delight in this realization. To feel that one "fits" in a particular situation can be understood as if there was a special place waiting for you to occupy it. To sense a personal fit within a community can be understood as a calling from within — a possibility of seeing one's self confirmed in a mode of being with others. In this case, Allison chooses the mode of being an artisan over the artist on the one hand and over the tradesperson on the other hand.

As she continues to reflect on her choice between the two communities, the arts and the crafts, Allison returns to the qualities of the inhabitants. The arts community was decidedly too high-brow for her liking, and she scoffs at it for being *pretentious, staid, grounded in history*, and for placing undue *emphasis on university education.* The crafts community, in contrast, was viewed as *down to earth, more willing to accept change*, and essentially *interested in experience.* Implicit within this comparison is a distinction based on real versus artificial existence. Pretentious or down to earth; staid and grounded in history or willing to accept change; university educated or interested in experience; these are dichotomies intended to paint a sharp contrast between two very different ways of being in the world. To Allison, one path means to live life in superficial and frivolous way, removed from the concerns of the everyday; the other path means to immerse oneself in the everyday and to engage life in the here and now. The implication here is that to choose to live as a craftsperson is to accept and embrace life in the everyday world where we cannot afford the luxury of concerning ourselves with only aesthetic ideals but rather, where we must integrate or balance our aesthetic interests with what can be seen as the more functional demands of living.

But having made the decision to take up a craft as opposed to pursuing the arts, Allison is faced with the realities of all that is implied in that chosen way of life. While she was very conscious of some of the factors that distinguished her two options, she came to realize that there were forces or trends which seemed to devalue the very qualities that had originally attracted her to her craft. She openly struggles with the notion that her craft, printing, is designated as a trade in most Canadian provinces. What appealed to her when she was contemplating her initial career directions was the blending of aesthetic and functional qualities in her craft; it appeared like the perfect marriage between creative and technical purposes. But the growing pressure, particularly from the industry, appears to be forcing increased emphasis on technical production at the expense of the more aesthetic dimensions that used to characterize the craft. She sees the North American trend towards *stripping the trades of anything artistic or creative* as endangering her chosen way of life, and she fights to retain these qualities in the program in which she teaches. Again, the older European craftspeople or artisans are held up as the last possibility of what a craftsperson can truly be, but at the same time she acknowledges their displacement by advancing technological development. Taken to its obvious conclusion, unless this trend can be countered, Allison sees the ultimate devolution of the crafts into mere technical applications where there will be less and less consideration of aesthetic quality. She will not back down in her commitment to restoring the aesthetic relation in her craft.

further perspectives on vocational choice

Although the two stories presented here portray rather contrasting approaches to the selection of a career in the trades, they both speak to some fundamental issues concerning the possibilities offered in working as a tradesperson. To Bruce in the first story, the trades represented a familiar way of being in the world; others in his family had gone this way before him, and from his earliest recollections he remembered his father as a plumber. Bruce lived with examples of how one could be successful as a tradesman, with his father becoming the owner of a thriving business that employed several good journeymen. He saw his brother give up a career in the business world (banking) to take up the plumbing trade. Bruce's identity as a tradesman, as part of a family of plumbers, is apparent from the opening line of his story, and it seemed like an almost natural choice on his part to continue in the tradition. To see himself as a plumber was to see himself as he saw his father, performing the honest work of a tradesman and possibly turning that trade into an enterprise. His decision to take up a life as a tradesman was so easy and natural for him; in his own words, *he fell into it.*

Allison, the printer in the second story, approached the issue of identity from a different perspective. Her concerns with selecting a trade emanated not from familial influences (at least they were never mentioned) but, rather, from a more personal consideration of who and what she was and what talents she did or did not possess. While her apparent concerns were with creativity, it was her assessment of her own strengths as well as limitations that eventually turned her towards a trade. Whether it was a compromise or, as she expressed it, an effective blending of her talents and interests with available options, the pursuit of fine crafts (graphic arts and printing) afforded an opportunity to work in a creative capacity. Looking back some years later, the appropriateness of Allison's decision is confirmed in her feeling of fit or belonging in the crafts community; she is grateful that she avoided the artificiality and pretension that in her view characterized the arts. As a craftsperson, she could satisfy her creative needs while at the same time producing functional products.

From the illustrations drawn from these two stories, the connection between personal identity and vocational choice is illuminated. To speak of identity is to refer to those characteristics or features which distinguish each of us from others as a unique person. In endeavoring to understand the expression of our uniqueness through choosing a career, it might seem obvious to settle for a trait-matching approach through which we simply try to match our talents or interests with available career opportunities. And there would be some legitimacy to such a view in that it is unlikely that we could envisage the expression or enhancement of our identity by choosing a career that doesn't resonate with our interests or talents. But if the notion of vocation holds any richness in meaning, then the process of trait-matching is too simple and static, for it does not adequately account for the possibilities of what we might hope to become through our work. Understanding vocational choice as the process of matching personal talents and interests with available job requirements is to reduce the whole matter to finding a niche in the workplace where one can fit. This view would suggest that there is some preordained place out there for everyone, and that the main challenge in finding the right place involves examining ourselves and the available places to determine the choice of best fit. Our identity, in such a view, can only be seen as a limiting feature that helps to narrow our choices, but taken from the perspective of embarking on a quest for vocation, personal identity can be understood more as a basis for possibilities that unfold before us. Inherent in the quest for vocation is the opening of vistas through which we are offered possibilities of not only what but who we might become, offering us images of hope that can be woven into our personal stories as we act in and on the world. In this vein, personal identity can be understood as a guiding force that offers direction in the quest for vocation.

Although the two tradespeople in the stories presented here approached the choices regarding their respective vocations from quite different perspectives, in both instances an essential theme pertaining to the nature of their chosen work can be drawn. To choose to work in the trades means to choose a particular way of life; it means committing oneself to a life devoted to creating things, to restoring things, to keeping things working, to adapting and adjusting them so that these "things" contribute to the endeavors and purposes of humankind. It is a life of work involving purposeful activity that is always manifested in doing something real or concrete; of necessity, it involves working with the hands (or the body). Curiously, it is this fundamental feature that both gives and detracts meaning from work in the trades. Without involvement of body work, the very nature or essence of the trades would be dramatically altered, changing them into purely conceptual undertakings focussed on design or problem solving. But that is not how we have come to understand the trades or the people who work in them. While it is recognized that tradespeople must engage in creative and problem-solving activities, the real value of their work is often recognized most easily in the products resulting from it, whether in the form of useful artifacts or in the form of services. In other words, the value or purpose of creative or conceptual efforts of tradespeople is manifested in their work products — what they produce or what they do with their hands or bodies.

For whatever reasons, we find a growing tendency to devalue handwork and those occupations characterized by it. A common attitude in our culture reflects the disposition that work involving the hands is somehow less demanding of human capability, that there is something base or demeaning about it, and that it represents a much simpler way of being in the world than is afforded through more intellectual or abstract pursuits. The notion of a strong back and a weak mind comes to view. An image of thoughtless repetition and futile laboring has come to characterize not only this form of work but also those who engage in it, thus contributing to a general devaluing of both. Along with this concern we sense a recognition of regret that with the devaluing of the trades, we can see the disappearance of the "real" tradesperson. And, as Allison suggests, an issue of growing concern is the current pressure from industry to further "technocize" the trades by stripping away any creative or aesthetic dimensions that might remain. Terms like "blue collar workers" and "pink collar ghettos" convey the low status commonly attributed to the men and women whose work is seen as manual and unimportant. Conversely, the distinction of "white collar" work denotes an elevated status reflective of managerial or professional responsibilities requiring a more intellectual or abstract form of engagement than is commonly associated with working with one's hands.

But if body work is the key factor that distinguishes a career in the trades, how do we explain the high-status generally attributed to the numerous occupations that also involve considerable handwork? For instance, Bruce showed some disappointment in his son's decision to be a plumber rather than a brain surgeon. Brain surgeons, along with many other respected professionals in fields like dentistry or ophthalmology typically require extremely skilled hands, but in contrast to tradespeople, they are generally viewed with considerable esteem. Perhaps, at least in part, the distinction between tradespeople and the higher status occupations involving skilled hands can be understood as a factor of education. When contemplating possible career directions, an essential consideration is the nature and extent of formal preparation involved. As reflected in the stories recounted in this chapter, both Bruce and Allison indicated that choosing a trade was seen as an alternative to a commitment of years of further study at the university. Apparent in both stories is an attitude of having had enough of schooling (at least of the academic type), and that potential career options were considered at least partly on the basis of what kind of formal preparation was required.

This raises an interesting perspective on the relationship between education and vocational choice. If certain options are ruled out because they require further investment in a form of education that was seen as less than fulfilling, then it would seem that the earlier educational experiences have served to limit choices and potential, rather than enhancing them. If the net result of childhood educational experience is that "I've had enough," a subsequent vocational choice in the trades could be understood as an attempt to find a more meaningful developmental route than what appears to be available through further academic studies.

On one hand, basing a vocational choice on the preparatory requirements of various occupational alternatives may seem like opting for a path of least resistance. But on the other hand, if the act of choosing is understood as identifying what one wants as well as what one doesn't want, then ruling out certain options based on previous experience must be respected. The question then becomes one of whether or not a choice made in this manner could lead to the pursuit of a vocation. Pursuit of a vocation is often characterized as responding to a call, but this doesn't necessarily mean that for each of us, there will be only one clear call that immediately stands out among all others. Rather, is it not possible that many invitations present themselves in the form of possibilities, and that we turn to our experiences and our sense of identity for guidance in making our choices? Taken in this light, previous educational experience can be understood as a critical part of determining a course leading to our vocational development.

It is apparent that both Bruce and Allison found obvious possibilities for vocational development in their chosen trades. Through their chosen work they found avenues through which they could develop their identities as purposeful, productive beings; their choice of work afforded them opportunities to contribute to the world in meaningful ways even though their choices might not appear all that popular to many others. But at the same time, they voiced concerns about some of the difficulties that appear to stand in the way of realizing a sense of vocation in the trades. Both Bruce and Allison reflected on the ideals of the old-world tradespeople, and how their work was characterized by dedication, pride, care, and responsibility. These were cherished values that were reflected in the workers and their work, but there was an unmistakable concern in both stories that these values were diminishing in current trade practices. Replacement of the old one-to-one mentorship arrangements and a growing emphasis on technical productiveness and efficiency were seen as displacing traditional concerns with pride in workmanship, uncompromisable standards, and the aesthetic expression of the artisan. In essence, there was a recognition of a danger within current practices whereby becoming a tradesperson could be synonymous with becoming a technician — a trend that holds grave consequences for the possibilities of actualizing a vocational pursuit in the trades.

As a conclusion to the hermeneutic discussion of these two stories, it is possible to identify some important themes concerning vocational choice. These themes (presented in the frame on page 108), as well as those which emerge in subsequent stories, are consolidated in the final chapter of this study where they are considered as the basis for further inquiry into the practice of vocational education.

emerging themes on vocational choice

hand work or body work — to choose to work in the trades is to choose a life of physical involvement. While there are other facets to trade work, such as problem solving and aesthetic creation, the essence of trade practice is in physical performance.

commitment and pride — to choose to work in a trade is to choose a life that is guided by a commitment to high quality work. Adherence to this commitment is foundational to the sense of vocational pride that is generally associated with the ethic of the old-world craftsmen.

aesthetic relation to one's materials, tools, and products — to choose to work in a trade is to choose a life in which aesthetic creativity is necessarily conjoined or integrated with technical practicality. To negate or diminish the aesthetic dimension is to reduce trade work to the performance of technical algorithms.

CHAPTER 5:

STORIES ABOUT VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Vocational development" may not be a very common term in educational literature but it is used here in attempts to capture, from an individual perspective, the experience of becoming someone with a vocation. To speak of "development" in an educational sense, requires an orientation to individual learners and their growth. It requires that we put aside larger issues like academic or societal concerns which often dominate educational discussions and focus instead on individual learners and their needs as they strive towards their own becoming. I use the term "vocational development" here to facilitate a conceptual connection between development (in an educational sense) and the human quest for vocation.

Albert Kelly (1989) suggests that an essential characteristic of all education is that it is inherently concerned with the learners' development as independent, autonomous, and responsible beings; failing this, it should more appropriately be called training or instruction. Using this notion, then vocational education must be necessarily concerned with the learners' development of those qualities or attributes associated with a vocation. In other words, if we take a developmental perspective, the mission of vocational education is to foster the "vocational development" of learners, that is, the provision of guidance and opportunities through which learners can develop in their quest for vocation. Kelly indicates that it is this predominant concern with individual development that distinguishes education from more instrumental undertakings, such as training or instruction. But if this notion of vocational development is something more than occupational training, what is it that provides its special nature? Must there be something special in the curriculum or might it depend on other factors? Could any occupational training situation be construed as or converted into a situation of vocational development?

In attempts to address these questions, we turn to some stories about vocational development; they are stories about two tradespeople and their experiences in learning their respective trades. The first story involves an apprenticeship situation in which a young man, Gordon, an apprenticing gasfitter, finds himself part of a construction crew where he learns and works under the mentorship of some old-world tradesmen. In contrast, the second story involves a young woman, Monica, whose vocational development began in a full-time college program (photography) and then continued in an industry-based or on-the-job setting. Examining these stories affords opportunities to explore the possibilities of vocational development experienced by two individuals who pursued their respective vocations in quite different manners and in quite different learning settings.

Gordon's story about becoming a journeyman

Gordon is the head instructor in a gasfitting program in a regional vocational center. Like many tradesmen of his age, he remembers when many of the supervising journeymen in the construction trades were recently arrived from western Europe. Like Bruce (in the previous chapter), Gordon recalls what it was like to serve an apprenticeship in the construction field. He remembers the rough-and-tumble existence of working out-of-town and the after-hour socializing with the other young apprentices, and he reminisces about what it was like to learn and work under the supervision of the old-world masters. From his vantage point in the gasfitting program, Gordon is also able to draw a number of comparisons between his own vocational upbringing and the way that his learners currently face their development in the trade today.

> *My apprenticeship? It was a happy time! You know, you have to remember that I was probably eighteen when I started. I know that I was twenty-four when I finished, about the time I got married. Oh, I remember lots of good times! The camaraderie on the job, especially with some of the other younger apprentices, the out-of-town jobs, staying at a boarding house, but it's mostly the drinking and the partying and the after-hours fun with my buds. Anyway, it was quite a good time, a happy time of my life, to tell you the truth.*
>
> *Through my apprenticeship I had a very well-rounded experience in the trade. I guess that was probably because of the outfit I worked for. They took on all kinds of jobs, from big, big industrial contracts, to commercial and residential work. As apprentices, we were sent wherever they needed men. The young guys especially, we seemed to get more out-of-town work, and as I mentioned, we actually liked getting away. So as a young guy, an apprentice, I worked at every conceivable aspect of the trade. Whereas nowadays, there is a lot of specialization which I guess, with the costs of labor, I guess you have to do that, but it doesn't give the young guys the well-roundedness that they deserve. We get guys, I'll swear, who go through their whole apprenticeship doing the same handful of jobs over and over again because time is money, and rush, rush, rush! That's too narrow, too limited, which we find somewhat of a problem because the trade advisory board*

wants a well-rounded tradesman, you know, well versed in all aspects of the trade. But the apprentice comes in to us and he's maybe only done basic stuff, so when you get talking about more technical jobs, the first time he ever does it is here at the center, and of course he's really clumsy at it. He's only good at what he's been doing. Back in those days when I was trained, boy, we did everything, from the most menial jobs right up to the very sophisticated ones. Even the foreman and the journeyman did the menial jobs. Everybody pitched right in.

But back in those days, you also knew your place. Although I was friends with them, the journeymen that I was working with at the time would never socialize with the apprentices; for instance, they would never take you to their house, you know. You would get along with them but you also knew your place. I'll give you an example: believe it or not, back in those days, there were very few trucks for a shop as big as ours. When you were going with the journeyman to the job, now believe it or not, summer, winter, well maybe not in the very cold weather, you jumped in the back of the truck! And there could be the journeyman all by himself in the front, and you didn't ask questions or complain when he says, "Come on, we're going out to do a service call or whatever." You'd get the tools and materials and you'd carry them out there and jump in the back of the truck and away he'd go. And you'd sit in the back, huddled in the back [laughing]. Everybody knew their place. Like nobody said, "What the hell, it's cold!" You didn't question it! Like nowadays, I think of some of my students, they wouldn't put up with that. They'd go throw the journeyman out and drive *themselves [laughing]. Things have changed, really. But in those days, it was expected of you. Nobody really complained.*

As apprentices, we took passing through the various levels very seriously, and this is still true today. Failure in the apprenticeship system means staying a whole 'nother year at the same wage at the same second year level or whatever, and having to wait a whole extra year to come back to give it a shot again. In our program, you can't re-write or you don't get supplemental exams. You get one shot at every subject and you get one shot at that final exam for each level.

There is that small segment of guys, as far as I know, they never do get their journeyman certificates. They usually come from the small towns, with a poor educational background. Orest comes to mind again; he still isn't a journeyman and he started back in the real early 70s. He's still not a journeyman! I don't know. I shouldn't say this, but I don't know if he's ever going to be a journeyman and he's probably one of the better workers, as far as that goes, one of the better workers you'll ever meet. Well, whether it's educational background or basic intelligence, I just don't know. He just bombs out in exams. I'm not going to say that he's ignorant, but he just can't seem to grasp things that should stay in his mind for a long time, memorize certain principles; you ask him a month later and he's forgotten exactly how it works. And the poor guy, he studies . . . Well, but he is a pretty good tradesman as far as . . . What would he be like, say, in sophisticated trouble shooting, especially technical or diagnostic skills? He may not be too good at that. But as far as installation work or routine construction work, *he would probably excel. And he works quickly; he's really good with his hands. I've observed him over the years, so to me, he's probably a quite good tradesman. One of the reasons he's back here in the program is that he's back in his hometown and he wants to buy this shop and of course he will not be able to get permits or licenses until he is a journeyman! So there is heavy pressure on the poor guy, so he wants to get his journeyman's.*

The transition from apprentice to journeyman is quite a leap, quite an accomplishment. You think about it, you work towards it, and you hold it up as a great goal, but when you get there it's not what you thought it was going to be. At least for a lot of guys. Your attitude changes quite quickly because now you're viewed as, although you're just a journeyman working for a company, you're part of management, you might say. But it wasn't a serious problem for me.

As an apprentice, your life is sort of sheltered. In my case, I was working for a fairly big shop so primarily I was working with a fairly small crew of people anyway, but there was always that journeyman there. And if things were going wrong or if costs were over-running, it was the journeyman who got it. It was his responsibility, and of course if you weren't working fast enough, he would crack the whip. Now as soon as you become journeyman, then it's Bob or Jack or Joe, "Take these six guys and you're going to renovate that boiler room or whatever." So you take this gang of guys and you know very well, you're usually shown what the contract was, so you think, "Geez, I've got so many hours" so if you see an apprentice off in the corner fooling around, now it's on your *neck. And our boss was very bad tempered; if he thought you weren't managing your jobs carefully enough or the labor was running too high, you got it. That was quite a shock for me, suddenly having to take responsibility for the whole job.*

I can think of one guy I actually went all the way through apprenticeship with. He became a journeyman the same time as me. He was sent up to Thompson to run a project at the mines. I never worked on the job, but he went up there with a small gang of guys. He lasted from Fall to Christmas. He came home. The responsibility was just too much for him. And he's a really good worker. He just didn't like being responsible and telling people what to do. And yet he was a really good worker. He just couldn't hack it! Oh, he was a very good tradesman; he has his own shop in Brandon right now. Like I say, I went right through the trade with him and we got married about the same time and we had kids together . He's a good friend of mine, but he just didn't like that responsibility. So it's not for everybody. But yet he was a dandy journeyman but he was not wired to run a big job.

a hermeneutic reading of Gordon's story

Gordon begins this story with a general recollection of his apprenticeship as a gasfitter, *it was a happy time!* He recalls with some fondness how young and free he was back then — eighteen years old, recently out of high school, and single. What he remembers most were the good times with his "buds" — being part of a construction crew, working away from home, staying in different places, and best of all, the after-hours partying. Interestingly, Gordon's disposition concerning his apprenticeship as a young man seems quite contrary to traditional notions of indentureship with its historical images of servitude and bondage. On the contrary, Gordon's opening remarks convey a sense of adventure in striking out into the work world as well as a sense of freedom associated with youthful irresponsibility. It seems fitting that education is often discussed through the journey metaphor, and if we look at vocational development in this manner, what could be a more appropriate attitude with which to begin such an important journey than the one expressed by the apprenticing gasfitter?

Gordon speaks of his apprenticeship experience as *well-rounded*, meaning that he had direct exposure to all aspects of his trade. He obviously valued opportunities to participate in the different types and scales of projects, and he sympathizes with many of today's apprentices who aren't offered such a broad range of trade experiences. He sounds somewhat apologetic about a situation which he attributes to rising labor costs, that is, with today's relatively high wage-rates for apprentices, employers sometimes resort to training their apprentices in only a narrow range of job functions in order to improve productive efficiency. In his words, *I guess you have to do that, but it doesn't give the young guys the well-roundedness that they deserve.* In Gordon's eyes, efficiency gained from this form of *specialization* comes at the expense of the apprentice's education. Gordon's tone suggests that *specialization* may be too generous a term for his situation; "short-changing" or "exploitation" come to mind. In this respect, Gordon faces a dilemma: as an instructor in the trade, he recognizes the violations of the curriculum; even the societal representatives — the trades advisory board members — are concerned about the implications that this practice holds for the future of their trade. A fundamental principle of apprenticeship pertains to the unquestioned value of "learning-by-doing," particularly under the watchful eye of a veteran tradesman. But if the apprentice's range of learning opportunities is sacrificed for a limited scope of refined skills, then the ideal of a well-rounded tradesman is endangered.

There is another fundamental issue that can be drawn from this concern with well-roundedness, and that is the issue of entrusting others in the vocational development of learners. Typically, program arrangements like apprenticeship and cooperative-work attachments are based on a partnership between schools (colleges or institutes) and employers. In these arrangements learners augment their formal school-based instruction with periods of supervised practice and instruction in the workplace. A central principle here pertains to the creation of an effective theory-practice bridge for the learners, but if one side of the partnership abdicates its responsibility for the profit motive, then the validity of this arrangement must be reconsidered. What is also illustrated in this situation is the special nature of the school as an institution, because it alone is distinguished by its ultimate responsibility for the learners' development. While other institutions, such as business, industry, and labor, generally play some role in providing vocational education, the school is distinguished by its abiding commitment to learner interests above all other possible purposes. In Gordon's concern for well-roundedness there is an illustration of what can occur when trust in an educational partner is misplaced.

Returning for a moment to the notion of "learning-by-doing" mentioned above, it would be somewhat short-sighted if this principle were seen as nothing more than a way of ensuring an adequate theory-practice balance in the learners' experiences. There is something else present in learning by doing, particularly when the practiced hands of a veteran are present to steady and assure the uncertain efforts of the novice. Through demonstration (modeling), close guidance, critique, and encouragement, a special form of knowledge is nurtured, a form that can only grow through guided practice. Molander (1992, 9) refers to this as tacit or silenced knowledge along the traditions of Polanyi (1966) and Kuhn (1970); it is silenced or unspoken because it is essentially "body" knowledge or "hand" knowledge that is beyond articulation in a theoretical sense. While this theme of tacit or silenced knowledge emerges again in Gordon's story (when he talks about Orest) as well as in other stories presented later in this study, the point here is that learning by doing is fundamental to the development of tacit knowledge.

Gordon underscores the thoroughness of his own apprenticeship experiences: *we did everything, from the most menial jobs right up to the very sophisticated ones.* Apparent in this comment is a commitment to providing learners with the broadest possible range of experiences. He goes on to illustrate how his mentors, regardless of their rank, would work side by side with the apprentices, even sharing in the simple or less desirable tasks: *Even the foreman and the journeyman did the menial jobs. Everyone pitched right in.* This is quite the opposite of any notion of exploitation; rather, what is depicted here is a sense of mutual support and shared status. Even the common practice of reserving the simple tasks for the less experienced workers (apprentices) is disregarded in order to provide the maximum range of learning experiences for the apprentices.

But Gordon is quick to add that the caring or mentoring attitude of the journeyman had its limitations too. While the journeyman-apprentice relationship was characterized by a fundamental concern for mentorship, the status distinction between the two roles was also clearly demarcated. Gordon's comment, *you also knew your place,* seems so entirely appropriate, especially when illustrated by the anecdote about apprentices having to ride in the back of the truck while the journeyman would drive, alone in the cab. It was clear to the apprentice that his relationship with the journeyman was deliberate and formalized and that any attempt to extend their association beyond the workplace would be viewed as completely inappropriate: [they] *would never socialize with the apprentices; they would never take you to their house.* While the separation of "private" and "vocational" lives may be something that teachers and bosses occasionally relax, Gordon points out that in the case of the old fashioned journeymen there were no exceptions — like the military, there was an obvious and enduring separation in rank.

But while there was a striking asymmetry in the role relationships, we find no trace of bitterness or resentment in Gordon's comments. Rather, we can detect a sense of strength and pride that comes from having struggled or suffered through the demands of learning the trade from the bottom up. Indeed, experiences like having to ride in the back of the truck or carry heavy materials serve to illustrate how, as an apprentice, Gordon had to earn his progress through the trade. As he points out, *you didn't ask questions or complain*; the situation was well understood by those involved in the trade — the only way to succeed was to start at the bottom and work your way up. But even beyond the sense of personal pride that comes from having persevered, there is an acknowledgement of the agogic relationship that exists within the journeyman-apprentice association. It is a relationship that, by necessity, is asymmetrical and one which Gordon recognized as arranged for his own benefit.

Turning to the current apprenticeship situation, Gordon notes how attitudes and relationships have changed since his indentureship; he doubts that today's apprentices would tolerate the subordination that he and his contemporaries accepted in an unquestioning manner. Instead, he suggests that many of his students simply *wouldn't put up with* it. Whether interpreted as disrespect or simply the sign of modern times, the unwillingness of today's apprentices to accept the authority or senior status of the supervising journeymen can be viewed as a fundamental change to the mentorship arrangements that have characterized indentureship through the ages. There is a loss or deterioration of the apprentice relation. This change represents an important phenomenon in the study of what it means to pursue a vocation for it raises a question about the possibility of "seeing" a vocation when there is little respect for the individuals who are best situated to provide assistance in one's vocational pursuit.

As Gordon turns from his own apprenticeship to reflect on the experiences of the gasfitting apprentices who currently are his students, he notes that there remains the same preoccupation with *passing through the levels* [of apprenticeship] as when he was learning the trade. While the program levels (for example, year-one, year-two, year-three, etc.) can be understood simply as an administrative feature of the curriculum, from a more personal perspective they can be understood by the apprentices as milestones or benchmarks along their developmental journey; the goal, in this instance, is the attainment of journeyman status — *becoming* a journeyman. Failure to progress from one level to the next is viewed as developmental retardation: the apprentice's becoming has stalled and so wages are frozen at a "trainee" level for another year while the unfortunate individual repeats the particular phase of the curriculum in preparation for another attempt at the year-end exam. Aside from missing out on the direct rewards like increased salary and status, there is also a deeper issue at stake here concerning the individual's suitability for the trade. Failing to progress through one's apprenticeship must raise obvious questions about the individual's aptitude or suitability to the particular occupational field. In more vocational terms, we might question the strength or clarity of the person's "calling."

Throughout Gordon's story the goal of reaching journeyman status surfaces repeatedly. To Gordon and his cohort, "becoming a journeyman" represents the crowning achievement in one's development as a tradesman. More than any other accomplishment, it conveys the essential qualities and standards that give meaning to a person who has earned credentials in a trade. But even beyond the trades, the term "journeyman" is used to express an unquestioned level of experience and reliability; the term "veteran" may be an appropriate synonym. Turning for a moment to the term itself, *journeyman* has an interesting etymological basis which is associated with the word "day." *Journee* (from the word *jour*) was the old French word for "a day's travel" or "a day's labor" (the equivalent of the Latin *diurnata*) (Partridge 1963). In an extended form, *journeyman* evolved to portray a man who was skilled in his trade and who worked for others on a daily wage. Reaching the journeyman status has meant, historically, that an individual had earned, through training and experience, the right to undertake independent, unsupervised contracts for service and that in keeping with all that is conveyed in such status, the contract would be fulfilled in an expedient, responsible manner. Attaining a journeyman status meant reaching a recognized state of accomplishment and independence in one's craft.

Gordon digresses briefly to reflect on one of his students, Orest, for whom attaining journeyman status has presented an insurmountable obstacle. After twenty years of involvement in his trade, Orest has been unable to pass his certifying exams. Gordon acknowledges that Orest works hard; in fact, Orest stands out as *one of the better workers* [in the gasfitting program]. Further, Gordon points out that Orest, who is very good with his hands, would probably excel at some of the routine aspects of the trade (like installations); unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Orest's ability to handle more technical requirements of the trade such as trouble shooting. And so Orest's dream of running a shop in his hometown escapes him because he needs a journeyman certificate in order to obtain the necessary permits and licenses. He has skilled hands which have served him well, but it seems that something more is needed — the ability to pass his trade exam; failing that, the government will not acknowledge him as a competent and dependable tradesman. Gordon implies that Orest's dilemma stems from an inability to theorize, which is why the exams seem to pose such a problem for him. It would appear that Orest's development of tacit knowledge has distinguished him as an excellent trades practitioner but this is not enough to get him through the government's examining process. As Smith (1992, 95) points out, this represents one of the challenges facing apprenticeship training, "whereas a good apprenticeship develops skills and tacit knowledge which a craftsman is able to pass on informally, it does not teach him or her to articulate or teach the formal aspects of their knowledge." Orest is caught in this bind.

As Gordon reflects on his own transition from apprentice to journeyman, there is a discernable note of disappointment in his voice: *You think about it, you work towards it, and you hold it up as a great goal, but when you get there it's not what you thought it was going to be.* But why isn't it the way it was supposed to be? What happened? Was he misled or mistaken throughout his apprenticeship? Could it be possible that, for all those years, he held a faulty notion of what it meant to be a journeyman? Or does "being a journeyman" mean something different than what it used to?

As he elaborates, Gordon notes how sheltered and free of responsibility his life was back when he was an apprentice (recall that his first comments about his apprenticeship were an expression of being young and free). In those early days he was primarily concerned with learning the trade through guided practice; the journeymen were there to look after broader responsibilities like planning and supervision. Gordon comments on how some apprentices remain focused on their own immediate concerns to the extent that they seem to take little note of the journeymen's role beyond those aspects that were apparent in the mentorship relationship. Consequently, when these apprentices themselves become journeymen, they are often overwhelmed by the responsibilities and expectations that accompany the change in status. In Gordon's terms, the transition to journeyman means *you're part of management*; as a journeyman, duties can extend beyond typical "craft" activities to include administrative responsibilities like supervision and project monitoring. The implications in exchanging the carefree life of an apprentice for the heavier responsibilities of a journeyman provide possible elaboration of Gordon's earlier comment, *when you get there it's not what you thought it was going to be.*

To Gordon, his development as a tradesman was portrayed almost like a chartered expedition in which responsibility for arrangements were entrusted to an experienced guide. While the apprentice must obviously make some commitments to the whole process, he is not altogether conscious of his guide's efforts or concerns. And like many extended expeditions, when finally arriving at the destination, the traveller may find that it turns out to be quite different from what was expected. But before concluding the analysis of Gordon's story, we turn to another, quite different story about vocational development.

Monica's story about learning in the workplace

In this story a young woman, Monica, reflects on her "developmental years" as a photographer. Similar to the preceding story, this one also pertains to a workplace setting (although not an apprenticeship situation). But rather than working and learning under the watchful eye of an old-world journeyman, Monica makes her way through years of training-on-the job. She describes the commitment needed to approach learning a trade in an industrial setting, a situation which she compares to the institutional training arrangement in which she now works as an instructor.

> *I started in a very small publications company, right at the bottom. It wasn't very challenging, but it was paying the bills. The nice thing about it, though, was when I got my work done, I could do pretty much what I wanted to in other parts of the plant. Try as they might to convince me to go and work in the production room, I just hated it, so I would just play with the new technical equipment. And I got very good at it. So I spent two years doing that. I enjoyed that part of the trade while I was learning it. I mean, any job I do, I enjoy as long as I'm learning. Once the learning stops, then I get bored. So I did that for probably a year or a year-and-a-half before I started to get really bored, and then I knew it was time to move on.*
>
> *And that's really quite typical in the publishing industry. If you want to broaden your horizons, it's not as easy to move within a company as it is to shift companies. Developing technology was very much part of this industry. It's also an industry that's made up of sub-trades; it's highly classified, and photography is only one part of it. You know, it's like going into the construction industry and being a carpenter and then deciding you want to be a plumber. It's a very difficult thing to do without starting all over again; you*

can't easily build one trade on top of another. And this industry is much like that too. If you start off in this industry as a machine operator, the chances are you are going to stay as a machine operator. Or if you start as some other kind of operator, you're going to stay as that kind of operator. So to break out of that mold, usually means moving companies, unless you have a very progressive management. And managers in this entire industry are notoriously not progressive!

So in about ten years I had a lot of exposure to different parts of the industry, mostly in photography but in lots of the related areas as well, which is one of the reasons . . . I know that's one of the reasons . . . I was hired as an instructor here at the college. When the ad came out for the instructional position, I had just quit a mid-management job that I had been doing for about two years. About two months later the ad came out, and I just applied for it on a whim. The requirements of the position were a journey level in the trade, which didn't exist in this province (the trade isn't indentured here). And they were also asking for experience in all of the areas of the industry, which is also an impossibility! I mean unless you had worked for fifty different companies, you couldn't possibly have that broad a background. I've never run across anyone in my life that had those qualifications. But I thought, what the hell, I'll apply for it anyway! So I did.

And I got it! And I got it, I think, because of the broad range of skills that I had. When I answered the ad, I had no idea what I was in for. I mean education had been the furthest thing from my mind. I had never once thought I'd love to be a teacher [laughing]. I *never once even thought I'd like to be a teacher! It was just not something that occurred to me, but in the industry, I had often been teaching. You know, in my various roles as an operator I had trained numerous people to do the job, but it was always in an informal way.*

And the industry tends to be that way. The program that I teach in now didn't exist until we started it, and so the industry was purely staffed with people who learned on the job. So what you knew or how well you were trained depends entirely on the companies that you worked for. Most companies treat training in a pretty selfish way. They know they have to train most new employees, so they start you at the bottom at pretty minimal salary. And as you get more training and experience, they know you get more valuable, and so if you're not totally satisfied, they know you will jump to another employer and then their training investment is lost! Some managers see on-the-job training investment as a risk that could get passed on to the competition. I think maybe that's why they often like to keep you confined to one area of the trade — so you're not so mobile.

But now that we have formal programs in the college, I still have some philosophical problems. I mean I see students coming out of our programs who have racked up two years, two-and-a-half years of student loans, not to mention the income that they've lost, and they're hired into an industry that is totally non-supportive of the program in terms of any monetary commitments, and yet it's the industry that reaps the entire benefit but the students and the taxpayers who pay the entire cost! And so I have to start *questioning that. If we are going to teach trades, would we not be better off going back to the apprenticeship system?*

a hermeneutic reading of Monica's story

In this story, Monica thinks back to the beginning of her career when she was hired as the most junior person in the photographic department of a small publications company. She was chosen for the position on the basis of a general two-year program which she had just completed at a community college, and it was her hope that within a few years she could accumulate the necessary work experience to qualify her for the exams in her trade. She recalls how, in those days, her disposition to the workplace was primarily as a learner. While Monica acknowledges that her job provided her with a necessary income — *it was paying the bills* — but more importantly it provided opportunities for her continued development in the trade. She appreciates that the requirements of her position were minimal, leaving time for her to pursue her own learning interests: . . . *when I got my work done, I could do pretty much what I wanted. Try as they might to convince me to go and work in the production room, I just hated it, so I would just play with the new technical equipment.*

There is a selfish, almost juvenile quality to her comments in that she viewed her work as a trade-off — she was prepared to finish her daily assignments, but after that, she demanded freedom to *play with the new technical equipment.* "Playing" is not a concept that is commonly associated with adult education and particularly with training in industry, and Monica's use of the term in this instance tends to underscore her detachment from more typical "productive" imperatives that generally prevail in the workplace. She reiterates that she viewed work as an opportunity for learning and when those opportunities were exhausted, there was no point in continuing in that particular position; when she would find herself getting bored, it was obvious that it was time to move on.

What is striking about Monica's opening comments is the intensity of her conviction in pursuing her own vocational development. She justifies her single-mindedness by pointing to the competing ideals of the industry, a situation where there is often little or no support for the development of individual breadth, but rather, a momentum that tends to propel workers into a narrow range of functions in a drive for ever-increasing efficiency. Monica notes that unless individual workers deliberately safeguard their own developmental interests, they will find themselves cast in a specialization that will, in time, entrap them. Monica senses the forced dependency in the situation, and intuitively she recognizes it as the exact opposite of the agogic interest she values as an educator. She indicates that the only way to escape such confinement, (in her words, *to break out of that mold*), was to move to a different company. Monica recalls that in her own situation it took about ten years of moving around the industry to develop what could be considered a relatively broad experiential base in her trade.

She notes, in retrospect, that her persistence in gaining a broad background in her trade paid off because this was the very quality that eventually earned her an instructor's position in a newly established community college program. As Monica reflects on the situation several years later, she is still somewhat perplexed by the level of standards and diversity of experience called for in that instructor position: *The requirements of the position were a journey-level in the trade, which didn't exist in this province (the trade isn't indentured here). And they were also asking for experience in all of the areas of the industry, which is also an impossibility! I mean unless you had worked for fifty different companies, you couldn't possibly have that broad a* *background.* What puzzles and to some extent frustrates Monica is the apparent contradiction between industry's view of a seasoned tradesperson and the community college's view of an appropriate background for an instructor position. The contradiction here is so conspicuous because the accepted view in vocational education is that, first and foremost, good instructors can only be drawn from the leading ranks of "industry." In fact, one of the long established career options for exemplary practitioners in occupational fields like the trades is the transition to an instructor's role. But what the community college was seeking in an instructor was quite inconsistent with the manner in which practitioners were encouraged to develop in the industry.

As Monica expands on training practices in the publications industry, we get a fuller sense of the traditions involved. She describes a situation where most workers are trained on the job, starting at the most basic-level positions and working their way to more complex roles. While in-house training of this nature can be viewed as a highly efficient investment because of its direct alignment with the employer's needs, there also appears to be an overshadowing concern that seems to limit its potential. She notes how managers often view on-the-job training as a risky investment, particularly in situations where highly-trained employees might leave the company to take a position with a competitor; in such cases, the training investment would be lost to the competition. She concludes that this apprehension about losing trained workers is a major factor in the industry's reluctance to adopt a more developmental or liberal view of training.

Throughout Monica's story we can discern an attitude of suspicion or impatience towards the industry. She leaves the distinct impression that whatever she gained from her years of industrial experience was the result of her own investment and determination as opposed to her employers'. In her view, her vocational development occurred "in spite of" her employers' interests. But going beyond her personal views concerning training practices in her industry, there is an important theme in her story that is essential in distinguishing training in the workplace from educational services provided through public institutions like community colleges. She makes the comment, *most companies treat training in a pretty selfish way.* In other words, the central purpose in on-the-job training is to enhance productivity — to get more out of the workers. In this manner, training is tied directly to efficiency. In contrast, school-based programs relate to the industry in general (as opposed to specific employers), and while they must also show a concern for preparing productive and efficient workers, they also have a fundamental responsibility to the learners and their development. With the creation of a college-based program, we get a sense that Monica sees the situation has been righted, to some extent — at least with regards to safeguarding the learners' development. Monica's earlier expressed agogic interests resurface again. She is still not entirely satisfied with the move to a school-based arrangement. Even though she is confident that learners' developmental needs will get fairer treatment now that the community college program is in place, the persisting selfish attitudes of the industry continue to annoy her. She wonders aloud whether a return to older arrangements (apprenticeship) wouldn't provide a better alternative. Monica is not alone in her sentiments; Smith (1992, 94) reports that currently among a growing number of European countries (particularly in Scandinavia) there is a resurgence of interest in reclaiming some of the more personal dimensions inherent in traditional apprenticeship training.

further perspectives on vocational development

Probing deeper into meanings conveyed in the two stories presented here, a number of themes concerning vocational development can be discerned. Although the experiences recounted by the two instructors are markedly different, some of the central issues concerning the vocational development of the two individuals appear to shared; in other instances, however, their experiences could hardly be more disparate. Regardless of the degree of similarity between them, within both stories can be found illustrations of possibilities for vocational development in the trades.

Perhaps the experience most commonly shared by the two trades instructors is the manner in which they approached their early work experiences. Gordon recalls how young and free he was in his early apprenticeship days. He has fond memories of his association with his "buds" as they worked and caroused together. And while all of this would change when he finally reached journeyman status, he relished the lack of responsibility during his formative years in the trade. In the case of Monica, it was again a lack of responsibility which allowed her the opportunity to *play with the new technical equipment* once her work assignment was completed. "Playing" was her term for experimenting and familiarizing herself with the tools of her trade, and through her free-time play she was able to expand her personal repertoire. For Gordon, the lack of responsibility provided a sense of freedom and enjoyment; for Monica, it meant an opportunity for self-directed learning. In either case, an absence of responsibility can be seen as a condition through which personal development was encouraged. The notion of *Lichtung* or clearing comes to mind; in this instance, responsibilities have been cleared or at least minimized for the time being in order to allow space for vocational development to occur.

With regards to vocational development, this period of freedom from responsibility is temporary, and as Gordon points out, it dissipates in the transition to journeyman status. Like childhood, it passes, but during its brief tenure there is room or freedom to grow. And while the notion of irresponsibility or freedom of growth may seem somewhat metaphorical in this instance, it raises an interesting question about vocational development (or any development, for that matter), and that is, "can development truly occur without room or freedom to grow?"

A related theme that can be identified in both stories is the concern for well-roundedness and the "tacitness" afforded through closely supervised practice. Gordon felt privileged to have learned under the tutelage of the old-world journeyman who insisted that his indentureship include guided experience in every possible aspect of the trade. But with respect to current training-in-industry practices, Gordon notes a deterioration of this concern for broad experience. He is suspicious that many of the apprentices in his program have been confined to a rather limited range of job functions in employer attempts to maximize their apprentices' "output." He sees the management's concern for efficiency taking precedence over responsibility for the apprentices' development; in essence, the apprentices are being exploited. In Monica's case, she seemed from the outset well aware of the need to safeguard her own learning interests against the exploitive practices in her industry. In her situation, there were no old-world journeymen to care for her well-rounded development so she had to be prepared to look after her own interests. To *break out of the mold* of narrow specialization, she found it necessary to move around in the industry — from one employer to another and from one position to another — staying only as long as there were opportunities for learning and pushing thoughts like job security into the background of her consciousness.

The challenge of attaining a well-rounded experience as expressed in these two stories leads us to reflect critically on the concept of learning in the workplace. While the practice of arranging workplace experience has become almost universal in most types of vocational preparation (including professional programs at the university), the illustrations drawn from the two stories presented here point to one of the possible inherent contradictions in the practice. Literally, the workplace is a place for work; it is not a school. It is associated primarily with the production of goods and services. When the mission of the workplace is altered to include the preparation of new workers, then this added purpose (training) represents a contradiction with the more fundamental purpose, production. For instance, novice workers require guidance and instruction, which means that seasoned workers must exchange their typical production roles for mentorship roles, which means an accompanying decline in production. In short, training in the workplace detracts from production, and the more extensive the training requirements, the greater are the production losses. As Gordon points out, with today's rising labor costs, there is a temptation for employers to short-cut their responsibilities to learners in efforts to offset their production losses.

Recognizing the difficulties currently surrounding workplace training arrangements, we might conclude that school-based programming provides a more effective alternative (at least from the perspective that schools do not have competing purposes such as production). Indeed, this may be one of the contributing factors to the increased popularity of school-based arrangements as evidenced by the growth of community colleges across North America over the past few decades. Ironically, a common criticism of postsecondary institutional programs is that graduates are often found lacking in practical skills because their education was too far removed from the realities of the workplace — a charge that has prompted educational institutions to return to field-based partnerships such as internships and co-operative work attachments. According to Smith (1992), unless there is a return to workplace partnerships, the nurturance of tacit knowledge will continue to be replaced with technical theorizing.

The intent in this discussion is not to weigh the advantages or disadvantages of field-based educational arrangements, but rather, to develop a deeper understanding of the potential that exists for the nurturance of vocational development within this setting. From the stories presented here, it is apparent that developmental opportunities in the workplace can be very rich, but they must not be taken for granted. We need to be mindful that the industrial workplace continues to evolve over the years, particularly as a result of developing technology and changing work organizations. We also need to remember that apprenticeship as well as other similar workplace training schemes grew out of the crafts era; how well these "mentoring" arrangements fit within the current industrial context may be questionable. Is this not, in fact, what Gordon is pondering? Monica, on the other hand, views apprenticeship as a way of forcing industry to more adequately fulfill its responsibilities as a partner in the educative process.

The examination of workplace training arrangements as "opportunities for vocational development" brings us face to face with one of the most fundamental issues in this inquiry. Within both stories there is a striking contradiction between industry's primary purpose — production — and the individual worker's need to grow or develop vocationally. Kosik (1976) would call this a dialectical split (between societal and individual needs) which most public institutions must confront. Within the contradiction, the voices of industry and government tend to dominate, and it would be easy to let them drown out individual voices. Should we allow this to happen, we run the risk of not only failing our learners but also failing in our own vocation. As vocational educators, we need to be ever mindful of our own calling — a calling which comes not from societal institutions but from learners (Homan 1986). To remain committed to the learners' vocational development means that the value of their experiences must come before any other consideration (even the production interests of the employer). If we fail to maintain this priority, then we will give up our own vocational ideals as educators and fall back to a mission of industrial training where economic concerns take precedence over educational needs.

emerging themes on vocational development

tacit knowledge and the theory-practice balance — the need for well-rounded trade experience goes beyond ensuring an appropriate theory-practice balance; it is the basis for the nurturance of tacit or body knowledge.

the relational quality of apprenticeship — the value of apprenticeship as an approach to vocational development is determined by the agogic interests underlying the master/apprentice relationship.

dependence/independence of the craftsperson — growth towards a state of independence represents a fundamental goal in vocational development.

the primacy of agogic interests — the guiding purpose of agogic development is jeopardized when commercial or other societal motives are allowed to take precedence.

CHAPTER 6:

STORIES ABOUT AGOGIC DEVELOPMENT

The three stories that form the basis of this chapter are about the experience of becoming a vocational educator — what is referred to in the chapter title as "agogic development." This particular phenomenon must be seen as critical to the study of the larger practice of vocational education in that it reflects how trades instructors acquire their identities, dispositions, capabilities, and other qualities which, in turn, are brought to bear on their learners. Playing the pivotal role in the educative process, instructors lend character and direction to the entire undertaking, influencing everyone concerned. We need to understand how instructors develop, that is, how they "grow into" this special way of being that is related to but different from their previous existence as tradesmen.

In these stories, the tradesmen describe what it was like for them to learn to engage in their trades in quite a different way, that is, not as practicing tradesmen working in industry but as trades instructors teaching in postsecondary educational institutions such as community colleges or vocational centers. Through their stories the tradesmen offer us opportunities to share in their personal experiences as they endeavored to grow into their new roles. The stories are rather diverse in nature, showing how differently the three men experienced their growth as educators. In some ways, these stories reflect bits of conventional wisdom or established traditions that have grown up in vocational education and which continue to characterize or even stereotype this branch of education. What we find in the stories are personal accounts of how the three trades instructors dealt with these traditions in their own agogic development. While the three men shared some common experiences in their transition to educators, they also approached their new undertakings in quite individual fashion, showing some different possibilities for agogic growth. Beyond the experiences of the three instructors, the contradictions conveyed through their stories illustrate some of the tensions that come to bear on those who pursue their vocations in this field.

In the first story presented here, Bert, a mechanics instructor, recalls how he came upon the opportunity to begin instructing in his trade and how, many years later, he still thinks back to the circumstances and the characters involved in that important decision. In the second story, Martin, a machine shop instructor, describes his struggle to become a "professional" educator and to distinguish his program as a leading endeavor within postsecondary education. Bernard, the carpentry instructor in the third story, reflects on the very essence of trades training and, indirectly, on what it takes to be a trades instructor. In their individual ways, and from the vantage point of their own experiences, each instructor shows possibilities for vocational development.

Bert's story about becoming a trades instructor

Bert has been an instructor in an auto-mechanics program since the mid-1960s. He joined the teaching staff of a vocational center in the early days of institutionalized trades training, back when the auto-mechanics program was very small. There were only two other instructors besides himself, and by today's standards, the curriculum seemed basic and uncomplicated. Back then cars did not have computers or electronic fuel injection, and auto-mechanics did not have to attend factory-sponsored courses to keep up with new innovations. Bert remembers the trades division as a rather "folksy" operation, quite unlike the sophisticated organization that he works in today.

> *My first conscious thoughts about trades instructing go back to when I was a young guy doing my own apprenticeship, studying with the old fellow who was responsible for auto-mechanics in the province. What an instructor! He'd get half-way through a basic physics question, or something like that, mind you, back in those days I had my grade twelve, which was a bit unusual, and he'd always say, "Ah shit, Bert, come up here and work it out for the guys." He'd call on me a few times, which I guess was a bit flattering, but it was also a bit frustrating.*
>
> *I used to sit there and think, "My God, you've got it all wrong! Can't you explain it any better than that?" So back in those days I was thinking, "That wouldn't be such a bad job. God knows that nobody could tangle it up any worse than this poor old fellow was doing." Then I got to be a journeyman and I was working away. It wasn't that I had an aching desire for twenty years to be a trades instructor. But back when things started going bad, I started to look around.*
>
> *It was in the Fall of 1965, just reading in the newspaper, by God, here's a job, two jobs actually, a permanent and a temporary instructor's job in the mechanics program here at the college. And I guess right about then, old memories flooded back, "You know, that wouldn't be such a bad job." And it's related to my trade — hell, it's an extension of my trade, and I feel I know enough about it. I have*

my ticket [journeyman certificate]; I have lots of trade experience; I run my own shop; and I think I could handle the job.

I actually applied for both jobs, and they interviewed me for the temporary job, and I was never so surprised, after finishing the interview and talking to the program head and someone they called the "shop director" back in those days, they said, "Well, do you think you can come here next Monday? That's when our pre-employment group starts, and that's the group you're going to be training." And I was running this little shop back in my hometown, but I thought, "Jesus, it's now or never." So I said, "Yes, I will be here next Monday!" I made the decision right then and there. Normally you expect to go home and think it over and wait for two or three weeks until they check references and finally contact you with their decision. But not in this case; it was all done right then and there. So anyway, I went driving home and informed my wife and got a place to stay in the city, and put the padlock on the shop door. It was quite dramatic... I can never forget that winter! It wasn't that I had an aching desire to be a trades instructor, but ever since then, I've had twenty-some years now, I'm really happy I did it! That bizarre day back in 1965 completely changed my life. I often wonder where and what I would be now if I hadn't answered that newspaper ad!

a hermeneutic reading of Bert's story

Bert begins his story by recalling the days of his own indentureship when each winter the apprentices were required to return to the vocational center for a few weeks of formal classes. In keeping with the rather affectionate tones that often characterize stories about apprenticeship relations from earlier times (like those recounted by Bruce, the plumber in story #1), we almost anticipate an image of kind and caring mentorship by an old-world journeyman with uncompromising standards. Instead, Bert takes quite the opposite tack, grounding his earliest conscious thoughts about teaching in the example of an incompetent instructor. Recalling his frustrations with the old instructor who was unable to explain the course material without assistance from the students, Bert comes to the realization that it was through this rather pathetic situation that he was afforded his first opportunity to visualize himself in the instructor's role. As the old man stumbled through his lessons, Bert was thinking to himself how he would handle the job if he had the chance. Curiously, these chances arose occasionally when the instructor would get "tangled up" in his own efforts and finally have to call on Bert to complete the demonstration. He feels a bit sorry for the instructor (*this poor old fellow*) who may have been well-meaning but obviously unequipped for the role, whereas in his own case he was thinking, *it wouldn't be such a bad job*, particularly with his superior academic background.

But thoughts of teaching were only fleeting for the apprenticing Bert who turned his attention to becoming a journeyman and subsequently the owner of his own shop back in his hometown. It was only when a period of economic decline set in, *when things started going bad* in his business, that he began to reconsider his career options. As it happened, the down-turn in his business coincided with a teaching opportunity in the very school where he studied as an apprentice; this time there was a real opportunity to take the place of his old instructor. As he reflected on his own trades background, Bert was mildly confident about his preparedness for the instructor position; it seemed to him that his combination of trade and business experiences should put him in good stead in consideration for an educational appointment.

Illustrated in Bert's story is an important phenomenon among vocational educators (particularly at the postsecondary level) pertaining to the route or circumstances through which they come to be educators. Unlike many of their counterparts in elementary or secondary education who decide on a teaching career relatively early in life (possibly while still in high school), vocational educators generally take a more circuitous life path which only later in life may lead to an educational role. Before assuming an instructor position in a vocational program, it is generally required that individuals spend several years working in their respective occupational fields where, hopefully, they distinguish themselves as competent, leading practitioners — the kind of people who would be viewed by their co-workers as worthy of the responsibility for continuing the occupation. Instructor or administrator positions are open only to qualified members of that particular occupation, and so when vacancies occur among college programs, the first consideration in finding replacements is to look to the field.

Returning to Bert's situation, when he compares his qualifications against what he understands to be the requirements of the job, his confidence in landing the instructor's position seems well founded. His accomplishments in the trade speak for themselves: his journeyman license, years of trade experience, as well as a successful business in the trade; what more could be asked of an aspiring instructor? Aside from his practical experience and formal qualifications, Bert has another source of confidence: he recalls how easy it was for him to take over when his old instructor would get entangled in theory. Even back then, Bert was able to articulate what his instructor could not. Now, with his extensive background in the trade, he knew that he would have no trouble articulating the tacit aspects of practical experience.

But in spite of his cautious self-assurance, Bert was taken completely by surprise when, at the conclusion of the interview, he was offered a position. He still marvels at his decisiveness in the situation. Maybe it was a fear that such an opportunity might never come again or that if he weighed his decision too long the offer might be retracted, but for whatever reason, he felt he had to respond immediately: *it's now or never.* And without any further consideration, he gave his acceptance, *it was all done right then and there*; he drove home to close his failing business. He is still amazed at that sequence of events over twenty years ago, referring to it as *dramatic* and *bizarre.* He was surprised at the manner in which the process was handled by the school; was it normal to make job offers right in the interview, without weighing the merits of other applicants or without checking personal references or previous work records? Was there some logic or rationale in this whole course of events, or was it simply some freak situation into which he was drawn? And he was just as surprised at his own behavior, accepting the position on the spot even though it meant closing his hometown business. Not surprising, that particular day in 1965 still stands out in his mind; it marks the point at which he changed forever his relationship to his trade. Bert can't help but wonder whether or not he would have ended up in a teaching career if he hadn't responded to that newspaper ad. We are left with a sense that he genuinely enjoyed his years as an instructor and that he is more than satisfied with the career decision made so hastily over twenty years ago — a decision that made such a dramatic impact on his vocational pursuit.

Leaving Bert's story temporarily, we turn to another situation of a tradesman and his agogic development.

Martin's story about becoming professional

This story is told by Martin, a machine shop instructor who can be seen as a modern-day representation of the old-world tradesmen to whom reference has been made in earlier chapters. Martin is a machinist who grew up in Britain where he completed his apprenticeship through one of Europe's oldest trades institutions, the City and Guilds of London Institute. In the language of earlier times, Martin would be seen as a master craftsman; not only was he qualified as a journeyman machinist, but also as a tool-and-die-maker, a qualification that ranked him at the top of his field. Along with many other skilled European tradesmen, he immigrated to western Canada in the early 1960s. Within a few years of his arrival in Canada, he was invited to join the staff of a machine shop program in a large community college. Fresh from industry, he was anxious to proceed in his development as an educator.

> *I used to think that education was stratified where you get elementary school at the bottom, then high school, technical institutes and community colleges next, and then university being the highest or the pinnacle. I'm sure this sounds ridiculous, maybe it's my old upbringing from the UK, but I believed that the quality or standard of education got better as you advanced to the higher levels! I took a short course here at the college — it gave me a very brief introduction to instructional skills for about a week or two weeks — and the next class I took was a university class, I maybe shouldn't say anything — the old devil's gone now. Well, the standard of teaching and the content, I felt, was drastically below the standard of the people at the college. Hell, I could teach better*

than that, and I was just a tradesman! That was my first experience with university education.

I was really disappointed. I could hear the comments of the industrial instructors saying that university was a bit of joke. But I didn't accept that; I thought this was just one particular instructor who didn't make the subject particularly interesting, or I wasn't interested in it, or whatever. And so my first introduction to university wasn't particularly stimulating, but I got over that. With the introduction of the new program, again I felt it was an asset, especially in the instructional skills, the testing, different things like that. I really needed a more formal preparation as an instructor although not everyone here would agree with me. When I came to this college, basically it was "here's a week orientation and there's the classroom" so I didn't really work closely with anybody in learning my role as an instructor. I never really got that until later when I got involved in the university program. But that caused me some problems too.

With the other instructors in my program, a lot of friction developed. There was friction there because I was coming from the university classes and bent on seeing how things might be done better, and most of our people wanted things to stay the same. Right, and there was, towards the end, constant friction because I wanted to change things, what I thought was for the better and they didn't. In fact, it got to a point because of my bullheadedness to some extent and wanting change that it got to serious friction there for a while. Fortunately, I was asked during that period of time to take on another assignment outside the department.

The problem, as I see it, was this: I felt the people who were in the department did not want any changes in the program. They wanted to maintain the status quo, and this is critical, they wanted to maintain the status quo because it was easiest thing to do. I'll give you an example.

We had an examination which was, to me, outstanding — outstanding because it was so bad! I think it had about 110 questions, multiple choice, and I think at least 14 of them were totally ambiguous. On one or two occasions some of the students basically fell out of their seats laughing when they read the questions and I tried to justify them. So after a little bit of experience as an instructor, I would get up in the classroom before hand and I would say to them, "If I were asked a question about this, this is the answer I would give." And that was about the only way I could maintain my credibility with some of the students.

Now I'm not trying to lay all the blame for this friction onto the older instructors. When I came into the department I was thirty years old, I was physically fit, I really enjoyed the job and I was wanting to go, I was wanting to do things well, really well. I think I upset people unknowingly or unwittingly. Because of my enthusiasm, yeah. And my attitude too, I think. And I think because it was specifically me that introduced the changes or said these things should be changed.

The main problem, I think, was idleness, actually, on behalf of the head instructor and some of the other older guys simply followed him. They didn't want to get into all the work it would take to overhaul some flaws in the program. I mean, the reason I

> *was doing university classes at that point in time was basically to make me a better instructor and so that I could better serve the program. But I don't think it was ever seen that way. I wanted to be a better instructor. I just looked at it: I'm a good tradesman and I want to be a better instructor. But that's not the way it was seen by some of the others.*
>
> *One thing that ticked me off about this particular department was that we had a real good program then. It was probably as advanced as it could be in the 50s and early 60s, and then it sort of stopped and it didn't go anywhere. And we had one of the best shops if not the best shop in our trade, I'm talking about the physical — especially the equipment, in North America, as far as I was concerned. And we should have maintained that. We should have been looking outwards and maintained the first-class learning place in this trade. It was always my idea to be the best shop in North America, and I was ticked off that the others didn't have the same idea. We could have had that, actually. We had it once, and we gave it up! And in my mind, the result has been that our trade has gone downhill!*

a hermeneutic reading of Martin's story

Martin's story begins with a brief anecdote about his first professional development experiences back when he was a newly-hired college instructor. He recalls attending a brief in-service workshop, the intent of which was to provide the new instructors, who had been recently recruited from industry, with a minimal battery of instructional strategies. The most significant aspect of the workshop was that it provided Martin with a basis for comparison with his next incursion into professional development, a university course in vocational education. He was anticipating a whole new kind of personal growth, something above and beyond what he had experienced in his trades education — this was the university! But instead of catapulting him in his new development as an educator, Martin's first experience with university education left him feeling disappointed and cheated. Whether a reflection of the class-consciousness in his British upbringing or simply a naive view of higher education, he almost laughs at his earlier held notion that educational "quality" was a function of institutional level . . . *elementary school at the bottom, then high school, technical institutes and community colleges next, and then university being the highest or the pinnacle.* It was a shocking disappointment for Martin who, after years of studying and working at his trade, unexpectedly finds access to the university. In his mind, the university was supposed to represent *the pinnacle* of education but instead, he found the professor uninspiring and the curriculum irrelevant.

Martin wasn't sure how to respond. Could it be that he was simply unfortunate in running into someone who didn't represent the academy very well — a rare exception? Surely, this particular individual wasn't typical of the professorate. Martin even entertained the notion for a moment that it might have been his own shortcomings, maybe his unpreparedness or lack of academic aptitude or unrealistic expectations, that prevented him from appreciating his first university experience. He was even more perplexed by his fellow instructors who assured him that he was taking the notion of university preparation far too seriously; in their terms, *university was a bit of a joke.* What a dilemma for Martin! He had always believed in formal studies as the way to achieve competence (even distinction); his schooling had served him well as a tradesman, and so it seemed like the obvious approach for pursuing his development as an instructor. What he really needed was a program through which he could learn "the trade of teaching," but it appeared that finding such a program was not going to be a simple matter.

In reflecting on his predicament as a newly appointed instructor, Martin found the situation very confusing. When he joined the instructional staff of the machine shop program, the college offered only a one-week crash course before sending him off to the classroom. He knew that there was more to becoming an instructor than attending this brief in-service, and he desperately wanted an opportunity to prepare for his new role in his typically serious manner. But what was so confusing was that the program offered by the university seemed completely irrelevant to the needs of the storyteller and his co-instructors. To Martin, what should have been an ideal opportunity for his professional development turned out to be a sham.

Determined, Martin didn't allow that first experience with university education to derail his professional development aspirations, and in time he was able to enroll in a more suitable program where he could develop his expertise in practical functions like instructing and testing. But years later in his teaching career, with university studies and several years of instruction behind him, Martin found that he was still unable to free himself from competing views about being an instructor. On one hand, his university studies provided him with a formal background as an instructor, something which he sought from the time of his appointment, but on the other hand, his academic pursuits served to separate him even further from some of his fellow instructors.

To Martin, the basis of his disagreement with some of his colleagues could be captured quite simply: *I was coming from the university classes and bent on seeing how things might be done better, and most of our people wanted* *things to stay the same. And there was constant friction because I wanted to change things for the better and they didn't.* Another contradiction for him after finally achieving the level of formal preparation that he felt was needed as an instructor, Martin finds that instead of facilitating his transition to educator, it puts him at odds with his co-workers. The argument that his proposed changes *were for the better* does not seem very convincing to the other instructors who seem consistently unimpressed with solutions drawn from university courses. Martin can find no better explanation than that the others (and particularly the head instructor) were too lazy to undertake many of the necessary improvements; these older instructors simply preferred to maintain the program in its existing form. Only in passing does Martin acknowledge that possibly it might have been his own attitude or enthusiasm that fueled the other instructors' resistance to his proposals. Despite his *bullheadedness*, he could not penetrate the older instructors' attitudes; in the end, he was relieved when he was asked to take a new assignment outside the machine shop program.

Martin's story is built on contradictions; it seems that all his efforts to pursue his vocational development as an educator are met with opposing forces. He is somewhat bewildered by the resistance he encountered in his agogic transition, and he is left to conclude that the root of his misfortune was the rather stagnant staff in the machine shop program. But moving beyond his immediate situation, there is a larger, more pervasive dichotomy apparent: it is the traditional separation of academic and vocational education, or said another way, the theory-practice split. To the older instructors, Martin's university preparation was incongruent with the traditions of the trade where practical knowledge is honored in its own right. In their view, university education has little relevance to the practical pursuits of vocational education; people with practical knowledge gained through real-life experience have no need for university preparation. A common sentiment is that machinists can only be trained by other machinists, and all the courses and textbooks in the university won't make a good trades instructor out of a poor tradesman. The older staff members are troubled by the growing trend towards university preparation, particularly among the younger instructors who, as a result, seem to question many of the traditions and press for needless change.

Simply by the manner in which he approached the instructor role, Martin was unknowingly confronting one of the established traditions in vocational education. In contrast with the older instructors who seemed content to draw from the knowledge developed through their years of work in the trade, Martin viewed his development as an instructor as the beginning of a new career which, like his previous one, would require formal training. He viewed instructing, like machining, as a trade, and he found it difficult to understand how his co-instructors could function as instructors without any formal preparation. Why had they not availed themselves of the university courses? His only conclusion was that they were too lazy. In his eyes, his co-workers approached instructing as a kind of semi-retirement or as a final phase of a trades career where one could find well deserved respite from the wearying demands of industry; it was like a reward for a distinguished career in the trade. Martin was troubled by his colleagues' disdain for agogic development, and the subsequent deterioration of the machine shop program was even more disheartening. Confronted with an insurmountable situation, he gave up all association with the trades programs and took a position in another area of the college.

Bernard's story about theory and practice

Leaving Martin and his dilemma, we turn to the story of Bernard, a carpentry instructor who has spent over twenty-five years teaching his trade, joining his program staff when the community college was newly opened in the 1960s. In reference to his agogic development, he has paid close attention to the variety of tradesmen who have worked with him as instructors and program heads over the years. He reflects on how the different programs took shape according to the various instructors' plans and visions, and he contemplates what it takes to develop a good trades program.

> *Most of the instructors here are at their best when they have their students in the shop. I have to say that I can't think of any bad practices that I ever noticed when it comes to shop instruction. Maybe they're more interested in the practical aspect and a little more relaxed in that setting.*
>
> *And in the classroom you would probably see the other side. It might have something to do with how they view their work. How they viewed the "theoretical," if you want to call it that, versus the more practical or applied stuff. That's right. Because they were people, let's face it, all of us as instructor here in the college, were people who went out and did it! And now we have come back to teach it. Some of the theory, and this is what can happen in the college, there is a lot of theory that is taught that is not necessary. It's "nice to know" stuff, interesting to know, but as a tradesman you didn't have to go that extra step that we would often take the students. Maybe we are just justifying our existence, or maybe it's boredom with teaching the same material. And of course wanting*

to know more yourself — as soon as you know more, you automatically assume that it would be good for them [the learners] to know more too.

I always had a suspicion that a lot of theory was introduced with the notion that it would lend some prestige to the program. Status. You know, they criticize the industrial programs as being at a pretty low intellectual level; all you needed to have was a strong back and weak mind, so if we could introduce some things that were theoretical, maybe we could elevate that image. But I do believe that a lot of that theory came in so that they could show that, "Hey, look at the theory we have to take." I know that there are particular programs where they go into design for just that reason! Hey, this is a technical school! We're not engineers here. We're not teaching engineers here. We don't teach design; design is not important at this level. I mean we should have some knowledge about why the design is done this way, but as a tradesman, should I teach the student how to calculate the load that will be placed onto a member? No, that's not the job! But we could if we wanted to take that extra step. It would sound impressive, but it would be better if that student would know how to calculate the fall of a roof so that it would have some flashing on it; that is important. The load, no. I have always believed that a lot of that theory was introduced simply for prestige.

It always raises a question with me about why the instructors enjoyed the practical stuff in the shop but seemed to do so poorly or at least not as well in the theoretical components in the classroom. It made me suspicious that they, themselves, genuinely

> *were not interested in that theoretical stuff. And especially, you see, because they were older. I will give you an example of what happened in one particular area. A student had to do some calculations, and the instructor couldn't do them! He had to go to the Math teacher to find out how these calculations should be done. This fellow's a tradesman! Didn't he have to do this out in the field? If he didn't have to do it out in the field, maybe it shouldn't be in the curriculum here. How can you ask students to learn things that the instructors themselves can't do? If you don't use it out in the field, then don't teach it. But if it is used in the field, then you better know it yourself or else what are you doing here? If you want to make a student aware of something, there are certain things that we do in the construction trades here in the prairies that are done differently in B.C. because of the climate. Fine. You don't have to go into detail about how they do it in B.C. But make them aware of it, that there is a difference, and why. At least that's my feeling on it, because the student is working here, and as he grows in his field, he will understand it better with his experience. But this is the idea that some instructors have: they want the students to come out of here as diamonds! We're not producing diamonds out of a trades program. We're giving these people some general knowledge and they practice their skill out in the field, and that's where they become tradesmen.*

a hermeneutic reading of Bernard's story

From the outset, the story by Bernard conveys a particular orientation to teaching — a familiar orientation that stands in direct opposition to the ideals expressed by Martin in the preceding story. To Bernard, the transition to a teaching role is a rather natural career evolution that should occur as a follow-up to real-life experiences in industry. He says, *let's face it, all of us were people who went out and did it. And now we have come back to teach it.* From his experience, teaching (at least in the trades) is something that is only appropriate for people who have the courage and stamina to go out into the world, to industry, where they could pursue their development as tradesmen in a meaningful, concrete way. Then, and only then, are they fit to come back to the school to prepare others for their journey into the trade. Like travellers who have completed their odyssey, they come home to tell their stories. For Bernard it is a combination of industrial experience and an abiding commitment to practice or "doing" that puts others like him at ease when they are teaching in the shops because this setting represents a simulation of their natural environment, the workplace. Similarly, it is this same practical disposition which exposes the instructors' more vulnerable side in the classroom, but in the Bernard's view, this a shortcoming that can be easily forgiven as a frill.

Bernard has a very clear notion of what it takes to be a good trades instructor — a rich experience in the trade and a bent for storytelling. But he cautions that instructors must maintain fidelity to their industrial upbringing with its practical orientation; otherwise the act of storytelling may take precedence over the sharing of trade experiences, and the instructors may succumb to the temptation of theorizing. He counsels against including *nice to know stuff* or taking the learners further than necessary in their development as tradesmen as if the limited space in their heads must be reserved for more relevant or practical knowledge. Instructors are further reminded to contain their own enthusiasm for learning; otherwise it could easily creep into their teaching where it would undoubtedly infect the curriculum and consequently deter the learners from more practical purposes. He implies that "good" instructors don't need to fall back on theory in order to justify their existence. A better alternative for them would be to trust and value the richness of their own experiences as tradesmen, leaving theoretical musings to teachers who have nothing better to offer.

Bernard is obviously disturbed by a trend he notes among some of his colleagues who he suspects of "selling out" as tradesmen in efforts to present a more sophisticated image as educators. He accuses these instructors of being ashamed of their blue collar traditions which they try to offset by the introduction of superfluous theory in their curricula: *they* [other educators] *criticize the industrial programs as being a pretty low intellectual level; all you needed to have was a strong back and a weak mind, so if we could introduce some things that were theoretical, maybe we could elevate that image . . . I have always believed that a lot of that theory was introduced simply for prestige.* Bernard allows that theory has its place in a trades curriculum where its sole purpose should be to guide practice, but beyond limited applications like problem solving, the inclusion of theory remains questionable. To Bernard, the ultimate test concerning the appropriateness of theory is whether or not it is required by practicing tradesmen in the day-to-day performance of their duties. His position is very straightforward: *if you don't use it in the field, then don't teach it.* He goes on to illustrate what can happen when irrelevant theory is incorporated simply to give academic weight to the curriculum — he describes how another instructor trapped himself with theory (Mathematics) that was beyond his own ability, and instead of enhancing his intellectual credibility, the instructor embarrassed himself in front of his students and the Math instructor.

It is apparent to Bernard that some of his fellow instructors have run amuck as they tried to negotiate the transition from tradesman to trades instructor. He implies that somewhere in the transition, some tradesmen seem to lose sight of who they are; they forget that they owe their identity to the trade and that their central purpose as instructors is to initiate young people in the continuation of the trade. From his perspective, what seems to happen to these instructors is that they become preoccupied with the matters like professional status and intellectual credibility which invariably draws them into theoretical concerns. To Bernard, these misguided individuals allow themselves to be distracted from their trade into a less authentic mode of being, and as a result, they jeopardize their programs, their personal integrity, and their trades. In Bernard's view, this dilemma stems from a misguided notion that becoming a trades instructor requires giving up one's life as a tradesman in order to acquire a more prestigious identity as a professional educator.

further perspectives on agogic development

From the stories presented here, it is apparent that there are numerous ways to understand the transition from tradesman to trades instructor. The sharp contrast in the experiences recounted by the three trades instructors serves to illustrate some of the possible ways of making this critical transition. Each instructor undertook his developmental journey (which I have referred to as *agogic development*) from industry to education in a distinct fashion. As they reflected on their experiences, they uncovered different issues and challenges that impacted on their vocational transition; in other words, the tradesmen took different routes in their development as educators, and accordingly, they found different meanings in their new roles.

Before turning to some of the ways in which the three tradesmen's agogic development conveys differing or competing meanings, it is worth noting that there was at least one aspect of their experience that was shared among all of the instructors: they came into their teaching roles through a mid-career transition. As young men, they set out to become tradesmen, and it was only after accomplishing that goal and spending several years in their respective fields that they turned to teaching. Each of the men referred to their trades experience as the prerequisite for their subsequent transition to an instructional role. Prior to becoming an educator, Bert had not only worked in his trade, he had also operated his own business. Martin too spent time in industry where he surpassed the general qualification of his trade and achieved the distinguished rank of tool-and-die maker. And Bernard describes all of his colleagues in the industrial division as *people who went out and did it*, implying that they first earned their credentials in industry before coming to the community college as instructors. In this respect, the three instructors are typical of postsecondary vocational educators, a group which holds the view that successful "trade" experience is an essential qualification for all vocational instructors.

With its commonsense grounding, this view has evolved into an accepted tradition in the field of vocational education: welders train welders, and plumbers train plumbers, and so on. When instructor vacancies occur in a vocational program, it is a natural response to look to the appropriate industry for potential replacements. But in spite of its almost universal acceptance in vocational education, this tradition is quite contrary to established practice in the larger educational community where professional educators are developed in university programs. As reflected in the three trades instructors' stories, vocational educators (particularly at the postsecondary level) do not typically begin their careers with aspirations to teach. As Bert acknowledges, *It wasn't that I had an aching desire for twenty years to be a trades instructor*; instead, teaching is something to which they might turn after having spent some time in industry working in their trades. Bernard's notion of "having been out there doing it," and then returning to the school to share experiences and wisdom captures the sentiments of the field. This particular disposition can be understood as a distinguishing characteristic of vocational educators: they have all "done it", they all went to industry where they learned and labored and honed their skills. Only after learning the lessons of apprenticeship and earning journeyman status did they consider themselves adequately schooled to "come back" to teach others. There is a certain pride in having taken the rough road through apprenticeship, and the experiences gained through the hard knocks of industry make the academic route of other educators seem pale in comparison. At best, university classes are viewed as theoretical alternatives for people who aspire to teach but have nothing worth sharing.

For Bert (the auto-mechanics instructor), the transition from tradesman to trades instructor occurred as a timely mid-career alternative, just at the point when his business took a downturn. He recalled how, as an apprentice, he was able to take over for his poor old instructor and work out the difficult problems for the class. He knew, even back then, that he could handle the job; and so years later, with the added advantage of considerable trade and business experience behind him, he was confident about his preparedness for the instructing position that appeared with such opportune timing. His confidence was confirmed when "on the spot" he was offered the position; obviously, he was just the person the college needed. To Bert, instructing was not unlike running the shop back in his hometown — it simply represented another way of practicing his trade. Accordingly, he knew that as an experienced, competent tradesman, he could move into an instructional role with relative ease.

To Martin, however, professional development was of paramount importance. Mastering the machining trade took years of study and practice, and it followed that learning the trade of teaching would require a similar commitment on his part. Unlike Bert, Martin experienced teaching as an entirely new undertaking, something quite apart from or beyond his previous trade involvement. Although he was considered an expert in his field, he saw himself as a novice educator, even though it was his trade that he was teaching. To Martin, his transition to a college-based teaching role meant learning a new vocation rather than simply learning to practice his old one in a different way.

The other facet of learning to be an instructor that both intrigued and confounded Martin was the opportunity to pursue his professional development through part-time university studies. He was intrigued with the notion of tackling a more sophisticated (and prestigious) form of education, but he was disappointed in its quality and upset with his colleagues who suggested that university classes were not to be taken seriously. To his dismay, his persistence with professional studies only served to distance him from the older instructors who viewed him and his new ideas as a threat to the traditions established in the program. Conversely, Martin saw his colleagues as selfish, old-fashioned tradesmen who lacked the necessary pride or self-respect to rise to the challenges of their new vocation. In his view, they had never become professional educators; instead, they had resisted any such growth and now they could only be seen as unprofessional. But what Martin has failed to distinguish is the difference between professionalization and professionalism. As Sockett (1987, 217-218) points out, professionalization is a process intended to gain recognition and status; professionalism refers to a manner of conduct aimed at improving practice. Martin sees university education as an access to improved status but he is hurt by his co-workers' view that university courses (and those who engage in them) are a joke.

To Bernard, instruction represents no great challenge or mystery. To be a successful instructor, one first has to "go out and do it" and then come back to talk about it. Teaching is simply sharing experience. And since tradesmen are practical people, they will obviously be more comfortable and proficient at sharing practical knowledge, which is why they generally perform better in the shops than in a classroom. The notion of tacit knowledge emerges again. Unlike Bert, who was rather oblivious to agogic development, Bernard takes a very firm stand against it. He is openly opposed to considering the instructor role from any perspective other than as a practicing tradesman who is committed to helping others learn in the manner that he once learned. He is disturbed by other instructors who stray from their blue collar traditions and attempt to elevate their status by including superfluous theory in the curriculum. Bernard accuses these colleagues of "selling out" for a more pretentious mode of existence; in his mind they have given up being tradesmen and have turned instead to being theoreticians, a mistake that ultimately will misdirect the students and destroy the trade. In Bernard's story there is a confidence that he knows what he knows, and given the appropriate setting (the shop), he can share this knowledge. He will not be lured by the growing trend towards professionalization that he sees in some of the younger instructors.

Examining these three stories provides some possibilities for developing a deeper understanding of what agogic development means to trades instructors. From even a cursory analysis, it is obvious that a single, common meaning does not exist; instead, each of the trades instructors held different meanings, some of which were in direct opposition to others. As reflected in Martin's story, these meanings or orientations can become so deeply seated (in this case, within a particular department) that anyone with a competing outlook cannot be tolerated.

Teaching is not a completely unfamiliar role to many tradesmen, particularly for those who were trained or who worked in an apprenticeship situation. It is commonly required of most journeymen that, as part of their normal duties, they take responsibility for supervising and instructing apprentices. Therefore, to an experienced tradesman there may appear to be very little difference between supervising apprentices on-the-job and teaching aspiring tradespeople in a college setting. As reflected in all three stories, there were tradesmen who made the transition to instructor roles without undergoing any substantial change to their vocational outlook. To these individuals, teaching simply represented another way to practice their trade; the context or setting was somewhat unique, but many of the other dimensions of the trade seemed to remain intact. On close examination though, a subtle hint showed itself, particularly in the carpentry instructor's story, as if to suggest that the college programs represented simulations of trade experience — they were not the same as the real setting in industry where a tradesman *could go out and do it*; rather, they were places where seasoned tradesmen *could come back to tell their stories*. If we persist in this line of inquiry, we come to the realization that schools (including community colleges and technical institutes) are essentially different than industry; the two institutions (school and industry) have different purposes, different structures, and different practices. Accordingly, to work as a trades instructor in a college program cannot be the same as working as a tradesman in industry, even though there may be some shared purpose insofar as the training of apprentices is concerned. Martin, in the second story, recognized this immediately; in spite of his elevated stature as a tradesman, he knew that his development as an educator had hardly begun. He was fully aware that his competence in the trade did not automatically translate into facility as an educator, and he was bewildered and then frustrated by his older co-workers who refused to acknowledge this contradiction in their own developmental needs.

In many ways, Martin's dilemma is indicative of the larger situation in vocational education where the first (and often only) consideration in selecting instructors is the nature and extent of the candidates' occupational background, that is, their "trade" credentials and their work experience. But if schools represent something fundamentally different than industry, then it follows that instructors too need to be different than practicing tradesmen; Martin knew that to be an instructor, he had to be more than a tradesmen — he had to become an educator. He was called by his own agogic development. Had he been less "bullheaded," he might have settled for the complacent view of his older colleagues who chose to avoid any inference of agogic need by retreating into the security of a tradesman identity where they would be less subject to criticism. To commit oneself to being a trades educator is to transcend one's former existence as a tradesman in order to embrace life in an agogic way. This means that trade practice must become secondary to the developmental needs of the learners; in other words, it is the learners and their development through the trade must take precedence over all other considerations. As reflected in the stories presented here, not all tradesmen make this transition. Some are not even aware of it, and others openly resist it. For these individuals, teaching their trade means a replication of unquestioned industrial traditions, the momentum of which drowns out the callings of the learners.

emerging themes on agogic development

the articulation of tacit knowledge — vocational teaching is not only modeling; it is an endeavor to make explicit for oneself and others what is known in a tacit or unarticulated way. Part of our confidence as teachers stems from knowing what we know.

academic knowledge and practical skills — the potential for contradiction between these two different ways of knowing becomes problematic when concerns for professionalization (status and respect) take precedence over concern for quality of practice.

professionalism — the concern for quality of practice (as a trades instructor) means to know theoretically what one knows tacitly or bodily. It means to be guided by the concern for the vocational development of others.

CHAPTER 7:

STORIES ABOUT AGOGIC RELATIONSHIPS

The stories presented for discussion in earlier chapters represent experiential accounts of trades instructors as they reflected on their respective vocational journeys. The three stories that provide the basis of this chapter are slightly different in that their principle focus is on *other* vocational educators who in some way influenced the storytellers. Of particular interest is the manner in which these other instructors related to their learners (hence the reference to "agogic relationships" in the chapter title).

In some ways, these three stories could be considered as an extension to those in the preceding chapter since they continue to speak to the agogic development of trades instructors. But what distinguishes the stories in this chapter is a central focus on the influences of other educators. There is probably no other avenue through which we can envisage our own possibilities in such a directly accessible manner than through examples provided by others around us. Regarding the three stories presented in this chapter, the storytellers reflect on different ways of being an instructor as demonstrated by others sharing this role. These particular stories "stood out" for the storytellers because they represented powerful illustrations of "how to be" or "how not to be" with learners. In some cases, these illustrations were held onto as possibilities or ideals towards which a novice instructor could aspire; in other instances, they were held up as examples of what can happen when agogic relationships fail to develop and some other kind of relationship grows in its place.

Michelle's story about ethics and andragogy

The first story in this chapter is told by Michelle, one of the few female instructors in Commercial Cooking and Chef Training, the largest trades program in this particular community college. This program is built around the many occupational specializations associated with the field of food preparation and so a great deal of planning and management is involved in scheduling learners through the various curriculum areas. Michelle is of the view that program management with its associated and rules policies presents a great challenge for many of her colleagues, especially those who like to see themselves in the image of highly individualistic, temperamental chefs. Her story is about two of the instructors in her program: Vince, a European-trained chef who spent most of his career working in large hotels, and Glen, whose work history pertains to institutional cooking.

> *Vince is very much a toe-the-line, follow-the-rules-to-the-letter kind of person, and so with students who tend not to follow the rules, he has a very hard time. He's right-wing religious and that all sort of fits into his personality.*
>
> *Let me tell you about the student that he's after right now. The student's name is Sheldon. Sheldon probably will not succeed in the industry. Sheldon will probably end up hauling garbage. But, whether they* [the learners] *will succeed in the industry or not, they still deserve to be treated as humans and as adults. I mean this student is twenty, twenty-one years old and Vince doesn't like him because he doesn't follow the rules; he doesn't respect the rules. So Vince says, "You were late; I'm putting you on contract," and Sheldon says, "Fine, put me on contract but I'm not signing it".*

He just kind of flaunts it and challenges him and Vince can't stand to be challenged. Or some day Sheldon will skip classes, and so when he comes back, Vince will be on his case right away asking for an explanation. And Sheldon will say something like he was at the dentist or doctor, and Vince will immediately start phoning the doctors and dentists to see if Sheldon really had an appointment. Of course Sheldon wasn't anywhere near a medical office! I guess the issue isn't just whether you're lying or not, its being treated as if you are. And so Vince can spend two or three hours pursuing this nonsense.

So yesterday, or the day before, he and Sheldon had a confrontation in the office. And I was sitting there. They were on opposite sides of the desk. Earlier with the dentist story, in the middle of a bunch of students, like there was probably 10 or 15 students, Vince just said "Sheldon, you're a liar". And he does that in front of all sorts of people. He's done stuff like that to me in front of a bunch of students. At this particular point Sheldon was on one side of the desk and Vince was on the other. Vince got up out of his chair, leaned over the desk, sort of towered over Sheldon who was sitting down. Couldn't have been more than two inches away from his face and started basically calling him a liar and all that kind of stuff. It was just disgusting! That's really typical behavior that Vince exhibits whenever he's threatened by a student in any way. If it's not students who don't follow the rules, it's students who are weak in some way. It used to be that he would pick on our single parent women. Vince just couldn't see these people becoming chefs.

So he would target the ones who are most emotionally vulnerable. These are adults he's treating this way!

So he's had a really strong effect on me in a negative sense. I'm very aware of whether I am treating people like children or whether I'm treating them as adults 'cause it's really easy to fall into that role, not that I think that's any way to treat kids either! It's the demeaning of the students that makes me crazy. Sheldon, this particular student, probably doesn't deserve to be here. He should have been kicked out a year ago. But Vince never followed through and did the appropriate paperwork on it and so he wasn't. But now he's got this thing and its just going to drive him crazy because he gets some kind of emotional feeding from doing it, from the contact, even though it's negative. It makes it really tough being in the program because you've got this guy who is nuts about rules. You can't be honest and open about what's going on. The students laugh at him or are afraid of him. Or they find out that they can butter him up. And so they just kiss ass with him all the time.

But then I have this other co-worker in my area, Glen, who is just the opposite. Glen said from the beginning, "It is not my job to change who they are. I'll teach them the trade, but I'm not going to put them on contract for being late. They're adults". So he goes to the other extreme and says, "It's not important, I'm not going to deal with it."

When we developed these programs there was an understanding that it was as important to have employability skills as it was to have the trades skills. Even the industry is fed up with temperamental chefs! But the employability skills are attitudinal!

> *They're things that you develop over a period of time when you're growing up and been modeled by parents or whatever. And those are really difficult things to change. And so Glen's feeling is that he's not qualified to be a counsellor; that's a way deeper issue than he's prepared to deal with and so he just lets it go entirely. But I think, if anything, being around Glen has made me a little more critical of that whole approach that we're using here. Of that whole idea that we're some kind of mini-industry. We're not! This is a school! And whether they're adults or not, people go to school and they turn into kids. Because you put them in a classroom and say "classes are cancelled" one out of twenty-five is going to say "Jees, I really wanted to get this done" and the rest of them are going to jump up and down and it doesn't matter if they're thirty-five or thirteen. And I'm the same way. So it's really difficult to say let's teach in an industrial setting, cause it's not! It's a school setting and they're paying to be here.*

a hermeneutic reading of Michelle's story

Apparent in Michelle's story is a contrast between the way two of her co-instructors approach working with learners. She begins her story with a brief introduction of Vince, whom she describes as a *toe-the-line, follow-the-rules-to-the-letter, right-wing religious kind of person.* In her view, these qualities fit together or complement each other in the characterization of Vince's identity. She views Vince as someone who is driven by his unshaken adherence to some notion of the proper order of things and a conviction that any transgressions on the part of the learners must be countered with punishment, something for which he personally takes responsibility.

As Michelle describes working with Vince, she focuses first on his preoccupation with the institutional rules including simple instances like tardiness or absenteeism on the part of the learners. It seems that even the slightest infractions cannot pass unnoticed by Vince who is quick to take retributive action. But as the illustration with Sheldon unfolds, we begin to see that it is not the broken rules but the rule-breakers that seem to draw out Vince's ire. Michelle implies that it is quite a normal state of affairs for him to be "after someone" — *let me tell you about the student that he's after right now* — before Sheldon, it was probably someone else. We are left with the impression that once Vince has targeted a student, all of that unfortunate individual's actions will come under the watchful scrutiny of the suspicious instructor. The prospect of catching a truant learner is ample justification for spending two or three hours sleuthing for hidden evidence.

As Michelle goes on to voice her disgust with her colleague's confrontation with the errant Sheldon, she explains Vince's behavior towards his learners as cowardly and bullying; in her mind, actions like shouting accusations into someone's face or berating a learner in front of others are simply too demeaning and unprofessional for any educational situation, and she finds them particularly appalling in an adult setting. She sees him as someone who uses his position to single out vulnerable victims who he can then harass under the pretense of maintaining institutional or professional integrity. In her view, Vince is able to see these unfortunate learners as naughty children who, for their own good and as examples for others, need to be punished into correcting their ways. But as Michelle concludes her description of Vince, she reveals a suspicion that his punitive demeanor is based less on a concern for learner development than on some deficiency in his own psyche — *he gets some kind of emotional feeding from it.* She notes the various responses from the learners, many of whom had to consciously adopt certain attitudes or defences in order to survive in the program: *they laugh at him or are afraid of him, they can butter him up, and they kiss ass with him.* Whatever their response, the learners realize that they need to negotiate their way around Vince if they want to survive in the program.

Michelle turns her attention to the discussion of another co-worker, Glen, who she sees as the complete opposite to Vince. Instead of concerning himself with petty infractions of the rules or the learners' study habits, Glen takes the position that his job is teaching his trade, not bringing up immature learners. Michelle mimics him: *It is not my job to change who they are. I'll teach them the trade, but I'm not going to put them on contract for being late. They're adults.* Whereas Vince would deliberately search out misdemeanors, Glen refuses to even acknowledge them. His position is that he was hired to train chefs, not to police a lot of rules that were created by others in the institution. Like some of his co-workers in the trades, Glen sees his ultimate mission as the preparation of skilled workers for industry; therefore, the program should simulate industry as much as possible, a situation which definitely does not include a school-teacherish concern for the personal development of immature learners. Furthermore, if the learners are to be accepted as adults, then they should behave accordingly, taking responsibility for themselves rather than expecting the kind of personal support that is typically provided for children. After all, when they leave the program to work in the food industry, nobody there is going to take any interest in their personal problems; they are going to be expected to practice their trade like the other chefs. In Glen's view, if the college wants someone to look after these more personal concerns, then they should hire counsellors, not chefs.

Although Michelle refrains from a direct comparison of these two instructors, it is apparent that she intended to portray in her story two very different ways of relating to learners. As with some of the other stories that have been presented earlier, we need to study the situation in this story from "an opposite perspective", in order to find possibilities which can inform an enriched view of agogic relationships. In other words, the illustrations in the story represent what might be taken as the opposite of an agogic view, and it is only through understanding how these examples pertain to agogic principles that we can see in them possibilities for enriched agogic practice.

In Michelle's portrayal of Vince, a particular view of pedagogy is revealed; she sees Vince treating the learners as children who need to learn to devote their energies and attention to their lessons. In the tenor of the protestant ethic, wandering attention and failing commitment are seen as powerful deterrents to learning (school-work) which must be dealt with in a stern fashion. But even in more liberal traditions, rules are like boundaries; in school settings, they are meant to keep learners from straying in their endeavors. When rules are broken, learners must be taught about the consequences and discouraged from making similar mistakes. But as Michelle implies, there is a danger that supervision of rules can take precedence over larger purposes to the extent that it distracts much of the necessary energies from educators and learners. In her view, this has happened to Vince, whose concern for rules and rule-breaking has become a preoccupation that leaves little room for attention to other agogic concerns. In the story about Vince, teaching is primarily an ethical undertaking; it means taking responsibility for the learners' conduct, particularly when it can be viewed as childish. It is a meaning that begins with a belief that the young learners will never become chefs if they fail to develop the appropriate discipline, and so the instructor, Vince, has allowed this ethical conviction to dominate the enactment of his role. He can be seen as the self-appointed disciplinarian for the program; apprehending errant learners and bringing them to trial have overshadowed other concerns he might have for the learners and their development.

The second character in the story, Glen, takes a much easier route but one which, nevertheless, could also be seen as related to ethics — he simply refuses to acknowledge any pedagogic responsibility. According to Michelle, Glen sees his role as *teaching his trade* (as opposed to caring for his learners' development). His responsibility is to his trade; he will do what he can to turn out chefs who are well trained and who can fill the roles that await them in the industry. He implies, however, that the extent to which he will be successful in this endeavor will depend on the kinds of people who enrol in his program; if they are mature, well-intended learners, then he will give them whatever he has, but if they lack maturity or motivation or direction, then they should seek some kind of personal assistance. His response is that he is a chef, not a counsellor. In Glen's view, it is inappropriate (even unethical) for him to get involved with his learners' personal development. His position is that, as adults, they must take responsibility for themselves; he is prepared to help those who wish to learn.

In the story about Glen, we can see simiiarities to some of the older trades instructors introduced in the preceding chapter; they have resisted any agogic influence and have chosen instead to remain tradesmen rather than becoming trades educators. And like the machine shop instructors who frustrated Martin in the preceding chapter, Glen is prepared to deal with the subject matter of his trade because that is what he knows best, and in his view that is what he was hired to do. But he sees issues like those pertaining to personal development as something beyond the normal scope of a trades instructor. Instead of developing an agogic relationship with his learners, Glen has opted for a less personal form of relationship that more closely resembles a supervisor-subordinate situation in industry. In this manner, he can limit his concerns to trade-related matters and avoid having to get involved in more personal matters.

Carl's story about ethics and professionalism

Leaving the chef instructors, we turn to the next story which was told by Carl, the head of a masonry and brickwork program. Carl has worked in this particular program for over twenty years, starting his teaching career in the early 70s working on a temporary basis as a junior member of the department. Over the years he was awarded a permanent teaching position, and eventually he was asked to take on the program head's position, a position which he has held for the past five years. The masonry and brickwork program is one of the largest industrial programs in the college, employing over a dozen permanent and part-time instructors at peak enrollment periods. Carl has worked with a broad cross section of instructors over the years, and he recalls some of them in his story.

> *As you know, there are guys that should not be teaching. There was this one guy I worked with, thank God he is now since retired! He simply had no business teaching. Just so lazy and boring! You'd see him up in the classroom, with the textbooks and the handouts, everybody sits down, and it's, "Okay guys, today we're going to learn about . . . well you pick the subject . . . product X. Okay, open up your books now. Here's information sheet 'A'. Let's start now. Pro-duct-X-and-how-it-is-made." And all day long he would read in his monotone to the students and they would*

follow along with their fingers. You'd walk by the hallway and glance in, and there they were — deadly!

For that matter, he'd do anything he could to get out of teaching. And as for the students, they didn't learn a thing! They just kicked and screamed! But the guy was there fifteen, twenty years, and it's quite obvious he didn't enjoy his job. He'd rather be out doing something else except, I guess he'd been there so long. It was a nice, warm building, but he'd do anything he could to get out of his teaching load. You know, try to doctor up the schedule, or whatever.

I just don't think he was truly happy being here; he was not a person-person. You have to be a bit outgoing and to like other people to do this kind of a job. And I just don't think he did. He was one of the guys that was here when I first came. You know, you observe a guy like that; you're supposed to learn from him or pick up little tips from him. I learned from him alright, but I learned more or less what not to do. He soon took early retirement and he's gone now. I guess he's happier now because he's got his hobbies and his sports stuff he does all the time. Anyway, he's long gone and thankfully, we don't really have anybody like that here now.

Is that what teaching's about — reading out of books? To me, it's standing at the blackboard and talk, talk, talk all the time, questions and answers. No reading out of the books! In the part of the course that I teach, we've got two large textbooks, and I've got lots of handouts, but I don't read one word out of that stuff. It's for the students to take home for their own general information. They can go home and read that sort of stuff themselves.

When you see instructors like this who have to resort to reading out of the textbooks, I think it's because they don't know their subject; they don't know the topic and so they just read it out of the book, and hopefully, either they learn it themselves or they hope the students pick some of it up. We had another guy like that, he had the reputation that if a student were to ask him a question, would he blow up! Just get really mad! He'd get quite upset because he obviously didn't know the answers! One thing an instructor has to do if he's going to teach something, you better have a pretty good grasp of the subject matter so that you can ad lib and be free, you know, that's the attitude I have. I do a lot of reading before I'll agree to teach something.

And then there's the other extreme. I can think of one guy who was laid off; he's now an apprenticeship inspector! Was he disliked! He was a well educated guy, just as well versed as anybody in the trade, he would teach to the top of the class and just slightly above their heads. He was one of these guys who just loved to bamboozle the students. He used to teach a section of the course with a lot of physics and math in it, and he would get more and more technical and further above their heads until they were all bamboozled, trying to show everybody how smart he was. The student just used to hate that! Oh, I know that's what he was doing — just knowing the guy's personality and all that — he had to show how smart he was!

Now I've had to do some hiring since I've been the head for the last four or five years. And what I first look for is an enthusiastic bright-eyed guy. Like not that he has to be a keener or *full of B.S. or with seven university degrees, but a guy who is obviously happy with what he's done and obviously enthusiastic about imparting his trade. I look more for attitudes. Like I can remember the first selection interview I chaired; it was probably the one guy out of the four that we interviewed, the one guy we didn't hire. Maybe he had the better education; he had two journeyman certificates, but he was just so full of self-importance and that just struck me as the wrong attitude.*

Well, like I said, I had been exposed to the guy I'd been telling you about, who shoots over the top of the highest guy in the room. This guy seemed to be that way too. Just wanted to really impress you that, the knowledge he had, not so much the work he'd done or jobs he'd done or his qualifications; just with fancy words and big talk and maybe university classes he'd taken. Tried to bamboozle you how smart he was. That throws me off when a guy comes on that way. It kind of shows that they're interested more in themselves than in helping somebody else, and if that's the case, what good are they in the classroom? Like I could just see that guy in the classroom, "Alright you young buggers. I hope some day you're as smart as I am." And then try to bamboozle the guys. It's like some of the instructors around here who seem to take great pride in throwing people out of their classes. Some of them pride themselves, "Well, I threw another guy of the class today and that asshole can't come back 'til he apologizes." That just throws me right off. I don't want a guy working there that isn't reasonably intelligent as for an education and this and that, a guy has to know his stuff alright, I'm not saying that, but you want to come across to

> *the students at their level. After all, I was in their boots at one time, so let's bring them up to a journeyman's level, rather than saying, "Boy, don't you wish you were as smart as I am?"*

a hermeneutic reading of Carl's story

Carl's story begins with a reference to a former colleague who spent the last half of his career teaching in the program but who never really seemed to fit or belong there. Carl's reaction is frank and to-the-point: *Thank God he is now since retired! He simply had no business teaching.* His frustration resurfaces as he thinks back to his former colleague's refusal to acknowledge his own unsuitability as a teacher. Carl's opening declaration, *there are guys that should not be teaching*, suggests that there are certain qualities or capabilities needed to be a teacher, and without them, it is foolhardy to even contemplate taking on the role. He is amazed and angry at how his old co-worker could overlook what was apparent to everyone and persist year after year in dragging himself and his learners through such tortuous boredom; anyone could see what he was doing to the learners, to the program, and to himself. His shortcomings were so obvious — as Carl concluded, *he was not a person-person.* In other words, he should not have been working with people because he was unable to connect or relate to them; he wasn't interested in them, and it showed; he should have stayed in industry. In Carl's view, there was nothing about his colleague that reflected an aptitude for teaching: he was lazy and boring, he would put nothing into his teaching, and moreover, he hated his job and would do anything to avoid it.

Carl concludes that when his old colleague left industry for a teaching position in the program, he made an unfortunate decision that led ultimately to the degeneration of his career. There is a suggestion that what drew his colleague to the masonry and brickwork program was not the prospects of teaching but the comfort and security of a community college job — *it was a nice, warm building, but he'd do anything he could to get out of his teaching load* — literally, he came in from the cold. But as it turned out, the warmth and security were not enough. While he persisted in his instructor position for many years, he obviously was not happy and so when the opportunity to take an early retirement arose, he took it. It is rumored among the program staff that the former instructor is happier now that he can pursue his hobbies and forget about the demands of his teaching role which he found so unfulfilling.

Recalling the circumstances of this particular colleague sparks some deeper reflection on the part of Carl who wonders aloud what teaching is about. Of one thing he is certain: it is not about reading to the class from books. Instructors who have to resort to reading obviously don't know their subject matter (their trade). A competent instructor, in contrast, is free and spontaneous; he or she can function in the classroom without textbooks and handouts, engaging the learners in a dynamic interchange: *To me, it's standing at the blackboard and talk, talk, talk all the time, questions and answers.* Carl acknowledges that achieving this kind of facility requires a lot preparation and experience, without which instructors would have to fall back on the use of cumbersome aids that restrict freedom and obstruct one's ability to *ad lib.* It is the same situation as in the trade where the real veterans are able to handle the problems and quirks of the day-to-day challenges as they arise, taking everything in their stride; it is a sign of incompetence or inexperience to have to resort to references like code books or construction standards. To be competent as an instructor means to be free to engage with the learners in an active give-and-take that revolves entirely around their efforts to learn and grow. In this light, teaching is responding to learners, not following the course materials.

In a second anecdote, Carl recalls his experiences with another former instructor. Unlike the example of his first colleague who seemed to have such poor facility with his subject matter, the second instructor appeared to have a considerable command of trade knowledge including its more academic foundations. But rather than enhancing his instructional interactions with the learners, this superior technical knowledge was used by the instructor to intimidate his classes. Carl is convinced that his colleague was simply showing off — always trying to keep the knowledge out of the learners' reach, always taking them beyond their depth: *he would get more and more technical and further above their heads until they were bamboozled, trying to show everybody how smart he was. The students just used to hate that!* There is reference to some personality trait which the storyteller sees as the root of the instructor's harassment of the learners — *just knowing the guy's personality and all that — he had to show how smart he was!*

Carl points to a glaring contradiction in his colleague's classroom antics: instead of offering encouragement and guidance to the aspiring young students of the trade, the instructor discourages and misleads them in order to create an impression of his own elevated accomplishment. Instead of caring for the learners, he uses them to shore up his own ego. His concern for his own image prevents him from attending to the needs of the learners which should be calling him in his vocation.

Talking about these two former colleagues leads Carl to reflect on the challenge of selecting the right kind of people for instructor jobs. In his experience he has learned to look for *an enthusiastic, bright-eyed guy who is obviously happy with what he's done and obviously enthusiastic about imparting his trade.* While he summarizes all of these qualities as "attitudes," there is considerably more meaning in his comments than he acknowledges. The notion of enthusiasm is most apparent; if instructors cannot find any excitement in their trade, how could they foster any sense of wonder or arousal among their learners? The example of Carl's other colleague provides a good illustration. Carl points to another important quality among trades instructors, that is, a sense of enjoyment or satisfaction that emanates from engagement in the trade. In his words, an instructor *has to be happy with what he's done*; otherwise, how could he honestly encourage others to follow him in the trade? Again, a reference to Carl's first colleague seems obvious: Carl was sure that his motivation in taking an instructor's position was to escape the harsh demands of an industrial role, yet as an instructor, he was preparing others for industry.

Carl cautions that the issue of enthusiasm can be easily misread in some individuals. He points out that enthusiasm for the trade is not the same as being *a keener*, or being *full of B.S.*, or holding *seven university degrees*. He has learned that these latter qualities often reflect an attitude of self-importance which, in cases like his second colleague, can obstruct the development of a nurturing relationship with the learners. Carl reiterates the principle that people who are preoccupied with self-interests are prevented from caring for others: *they're interested more in themselves than in helping somebody else*; in his view, their capacity as educators is limited. He sees a similar demonstration of self-importance among instructors who seem to take pride in expelling learners from the classroom. While he suspects that these instructors think their actions reflect a commitment to some kind of standard or value, Carl sees these tough acts as nothing more than bullying the learners. Instead of respecting this practice, he sees it as another illustration of confusing agogic responsibility with power. Rather than fostering learner growth, these misguided instructors seem bent on preventing it.

Dan's story about inspiration and teaching

The third story in this chapter is told by Dan, one of the older instructors at his college and one of the few people who still remembers some of the original instructors who came directly from industry to start the programs in the construction trades. Dan has lived through a lot of change during his thirty-some years in the trades division. He remembers when the institution was an adult vocational center back in the 60s, before it became a community college, and he recalls the excitement of those days when he and others like him came from industry to start the first formal institutional programs in the province.

Dan has worked with a lot of instructors over the years, from those who came straight out of industry to the current generation sporting their university diplomas and degrees. He recalls some of his earlier co-workers and how they related to their learners.

> *I've had some great lessons from some of the veterans around here. I'm talking about some of the older trades instructors in this division; they're all gone now, some retired, others passed away. There was a department head in the next shop; he was a former alcoholic. And when students would show up without their assignments completed or without their projects done, they would trot out all kinds of excuses. And he would put his hand on their shoulder and he would say in a fatherly way, "Son, I'm a former alcoholic. I've used more god damned excuses in my life than you've ever thought of! [laughing] And they never helped me a bit, and they didn't fool anybody! When it comes to excuses, you're still an amateur but I'm a pro, so why don't you just forget the bullshit and go finish your assignment instead?" So that was his approach*

to those kinds of things. And he was kind of a gruff fellow, but at the same time, he wasn't mean. Students respected him and they soon recognized his standards.

And there was another guy in the same program. He used to have some sayings! He would give a lecture in the classroom, and just to stress the point and bring it to a conclusion, he'd say, "Just as sure as there's cold shit in a dead dog!" [laughing] This was his way of putting his stamp on it, like that was the way it was, and that's all there was to it!

Some of these fellows were maybe a bit unorthodox but I really don't think so because these types of stories, when you're teaching the type of material that you teach in the industrial area, you have to have some humor and some punch; otherwise you lose the students. You can't just go in there and drive straight technical material into their heads and expect them to sit there and absorb it. Yes, these fellows would keep the students engaged with their stories. They were a credit to the college because they got the message across to the students in a way that the students will always remember, and that's important. You can't mention them without thinking of stories.

Whereas sitting and reading to the class, never! I could never sit behind a desk and teach a class. I think that's a terrible practice, but there are people who do that. I have seen an instructor who gave an exam and actually fell asleep, and the students actually finished the exam and got up and walked out. Can you imagine? I think that shows that the person has very little interest in the students or the material. He is there for one purpose, to put *money in his pocket, and that's it! And when that happens, when money becomes the ulterior motive for education or for you to be teaching, you're in the wrong job. I mean, why don't they just stay out in the industry and make way more money? Another guy that we used to have around here would sit in the classroom, his feet on the desk like this, and talk to the students. I mean, what arrogance! Like "This is all so casual, and I really know it all." I think that's horrible! Disrespect of the people. What bothers me even more is that is a reflection on me as another educator in this institution.*

When you really do make a mark, it's not just a fact that you have a good technical knowledge, but there's something that goes back to your personal experience and your ability to tell stories about that, and to make those stories real for those young people who haven't yet had those experiences. And it all comes alive for them. You know, we had this one fellow in the Masonry Program here, he used to tell stories about having visited the pyramids during the war when he was over there. Literally, he used to preach about the pyramids and what marvels of masonry construction they represented! And I remember this one story about a young guy who was this instructor's graduate; this former student ran [illegible]o the old instructor at some function here at the college years later; he ran up to his old instructor who was in the middle of a cocktail group and burst out, "I did it! I did it! I finally did it! I went over there and saw 'em! I saw the fucking pyramids!"

Now to go back to the guy who folds his hands behind his head and puts his feet on the desk and lectures, I think it says *something pretty obvious. To me, it says that he knows it all and he's superior. It's the power position, the elevated position. Whereas this older fellow I was just talking about, the pyramids, he was a real inspiration in his method of instruction. It was a relaxed method, a fatherly approach. Actually, he was at the same level as the students, and I think that's important when you're instructing. You see some instructors trying to get to that level by their dress, to the student level. They don't know that they've got to be superior but they want to make themselves appear like a buddy, and their dress — they'll teach in blue jeans. Like there's nothing the matter with blue jeans, but that doesn't bring them down to the student's level. And the students see this, and they lose respect for those teachers.*

The students want an instructor who treats them with respect, one who is not overpowering the students but is willing to assist them. Our students are not naughty little kids. These people, most of them anyway, have come here as young adults. Now of course there are students who will take advantage of you, but you have to be able to judge the student who honestly does not understand it. That doesn't mean that he shouldn't be here. That means that you as an instructor have the responsibility of doing something to help that student catch on. And I think that's important. In doing that you will gain the respect of the student. He will also more than likely try harder to catch on to what you are trying to get across to him. But you have to be the one that has to be prepared to do something. You can't just send him away to work it out on his own, even if he is a young adult.

a hermeneutic reading of Dan's story

In his recollections of the many instructors with whom he worked in the trades division over the years, Dan finds that those who to come to mind first are *the veterans* — some of the instructors and program heads who first established the trades in the institution. Like Dan, these people were pioneers whose infectious spirits gave life to their newborn programs, animating their relationships with co-instructors and learners alike. These early vocational educators came from industry, bringing with them not only the technical knowledge of their trades but also the many traditions captured in the attitudes and discourse of the trade. Unencumbered and unsophisticated, these tradesmen brought with them their own unique orientation to teaching.

Dan's story is a loose collection of anecdotes about different ways of relating to learners. In his first illustration, he refers to a situation which is quite common to most instructors — dealing with late assignments. Dan's former colleague developed a somewhat standardized but nonetheless personal response to his learners' pleas for special consideration. His message was brief but effective: *Son, I'm a former alcoholic. I've used more god damned excuses in my life than you've ever thought of! And they never helped me a bit, and they didn't fool anybody! When it comes to excuses, you're still an amateur but I'm a pro, so why don't you just forget the bullshit and go finish your assignment instead?* One can visualize the surprise and embarrassment of a young apprentice when his case, carefully thought out and rehearsed, is dismissed in an instant. The instructor's response begins with what appears like a parental gesture — a hand on the young man's shoulder and an acknowledgement, "*Son.*" A hapless apprentice might be drawn in momentarily by the instructor's understanding attitude and his personal admission about being a recovering alcoholic. But the immediate reference to *god damned excuses* and *bullshit* that follows quickly casts a new light on the tenor of the exchange. The fatherly disposition proved to be a set-up for the uncompromising position that followed: attempts to explain missed deadlines are seen as excuses, none of which are acceptable, so quit wasting time and go do what you were asked to do! This is the way of the trade — there are no acceptable excuses for failing to meet routine demands.

In describing his former colleague, Dan shows that taking a strong position or upholding uncompromising standards is not the same as being mean. The instructor, whom Dan refers to as *kind of a gruff fellow*, opens his response with an admission of his own humanness (and vulnerability); it is a way of showing the learners that he too had found difficulty in meeting certain standards and expectations that ultimately had to be faced. His refusal to compromise standards concerning assignment deadlines was his way of showing right from the start that it would be difficult for learners to shirk their responsibilities to him just as it would be difficult to get around meeting certain expectations in the trade. *He wasn't mean* but he wasn't easy either.

Dan was amused by what could be seen as *unorthodox* practices such as punctuating conclusions with crude expressions that normally would be considered out of place in most educational settings. But in trades training, Dan views these practices as not only acceptable but possibly necessary as a means of adding humor and interest to otherwise boring subject matter. He comments, *you can't just go in there and drive straight technical material into these people and expect them to sit there and absorb it.* We are left with the impression that by its very nature, the subject matter is so onerous or devoid of any natural stimulation that some special means is required to make it more palatable for the learners. In Dan's view, the older trades instructors instinctively recognized this dilemma and turned, therefore, to a more unorthodox style of teaching as a means of more effectively engaging the learners. The inherently boring nature of the trades curriculum had to be offset by the individualistic character and colorful stories of the instructors.

While Dan finds storytelling such a powerful facility for "bringing to life" the otherwise boring subject matter of the trades curriculum, he notes that there are other instructors around him who don't seem to show much concern for the learners and whether or not they find any life in the curriculum. Like some of the trades instructors introduced in earlier stories, Dan points immediately to those instructors who resort to reading to their classes — an indication of disinterest and unpreparedness on the part of the instructors, demonstrating a lack of concern for the learners and the trade. As if these instructors don't represent a bad enough illustration of poor teaching, Dan continues with more anecdotes — the instructor who fell asleep while supervising an exam and another who lectured from a reclining position with his feet on his desk. Dan is appalled with these practices which he views as reflections of complete disrespect for the learners, the trade, the institution, and the profession of teaching. He cannot understand why these individuals have taken up teaching; if making money is their major motive, then it seems to Dan that they would have been better situated in industry.

Leaving his illustrations of uncaring instructors, Dan continues his discussion of engaging approaches to trades instruction. Rather than concentrating solely on the development of technical or procedural skills, a rather common attitude in trades education, Dan is more concerned with the process of tapping instructor experiences for the benefit of the young learners who themselves have not yet had much trade exposure. A key part of his conception of teaching is to share those rich experiences so that, in his words, *it all comes alive for them.* Through the illustration of his former colleague and the pyramids, Dan shows just how *alive* or real stories can become when they are told by a master; in this instance, the instructor's stories led a graduate to Egypt to experience firsthand the marvels of the pyramids. But Dan is leading to something here that is much larger than storytelling. He is illustrating a way of being with his learners that is personal, embodied, and inspiring. He shows that to teach masonry construction is to teach the image of stones and bricks and pyramids; it is to teach in an animated way so that *it all comes alive for them.*

Dan sees the natural bridge between instructor and learners occuring through more personal ways of teaching like storytelling. Because stories represent such an essential part of human interaction, they provide an obvious medium through which the rich experiences (and ideals) of instructors can be shared with learners. Storytelling gives teaching an almost parental complexion; Dan describes his former colleague's orientation as a *relaxed* and *fatherly* approach which allows the learners and the instructor to share experiences in such a natural or comfortable manner that the stereotypical teacher-student (authoritative) relationship is displaced. At the same time, Dan shakes his head at some misguided instructors who don't understand their responsibility as educators and who think they can win the respect of the learners by trying to behave like them. Dan points out that respect is mutually developed between committed instructors and learners, and that the way an instructor encourages its growth is through caring, responsible action.

further perspectives on agogic relationships

Through the stories contained in this chapter, we are afforded insights into some of the ways that trades instructors build relationships with their learners. In describing some of their present or former colleagues, the three instructors (Michelle, Carl, and Dan) provided various illustrations of agogic relationships as well as some interpretation of each one. Examining these illustrations and interpretations reveals some of the meanings that instructors hold regarding their lives with learners.

Apparent within each of the three stories are concerns about individuals who seem to be unsuited to the role of teaching but who nevertheless find their way into teaching positions where they often remain for years or even decades. We met the first of these characters in Michelle's story: Vince was like an old fashioned "school master" under whose watchful eye even the slightest infraction of the rules was not permitted. By treating his learners like naughty children, Vince felt justified in adopting the position of a stern parent who needed to enforce the rules for the good of the child. In Michelle's view, Vince was nourishing his own sick ego rather than caring for his learners. Michelle's other colleague, Glen, chose the opposite extreme, refusing to acknowledge the learners and their developmental needs and focusing instead on his responsibility to the trade or to the labor market. In his view, personal development was the purview of counsellors. In the example of Vince we see a rather severe view of agogic responsibility in which his zeal for rule enforcement preoccupies him to the point that it crowds out other more agogic ways of being with learners. In Glen's case, we see an avoidance of agogic responsibility. By delimiting his role to teaching cooking, he attempts to depict anything related to personal development as the responsibility of counsellors, thus freeing him from any agogic relationship. Underlying Michelle's comparison of the extreme positions represented by Vince and Glen is the issue of ethics; in Vince's case, it is the ethics of andragogy, and in Glen's case, it is the ethics of craft. In both instances, the key characters (Vince and Glen) chose to uphold these ethics in very specific but inadequate ways.

The discussion of Carl's old colleague in the second story presented another illustration of ethical considerations — in this case, an issue of professional ethics. In Carl's view, his former co-instructor simply was not interested in teaching: he didn't care about the learners, he wasn't interested in the curriculum or the trade, and he didn't find teaching an engaging activity. Carl's conclusion was that his colleague had "come in from the cold" — that is, he was teaching because of the security and benefits available to teachers, not because he was drawn to it in some "vocational" sense. Year after year, he would go through the motions of teaching without investing of himself or engaging the learners; he learned that he could survive through minimum efforts.

Reflecting on another colleague who delighted in frustrating his learners by elevating his instruction beyond their grasp, Carl concludes that the reason that some trades instructors prove to be so unsuitable is because they are primarily concerned with themselves rather than with the welfare of the learners — *they're interested more in themselves than in helping somebody else.* Carl is also convinced that formal credentials hold little meaning when it comes to selecting good instructors; technical certificates and university degrees offer no assurance of an instructor's motives. In hiring instructors Carl has learned to pay more attention to indications of enthusiasm for working with learners or a willingness to engage with them as they make their way into the trade.

While Dan, in the third story, also makes reference to the inappropriateness of instructors who show little or no interest in their learners' development, his main focus is on more promising ways of relating to learners. Dan has strong recollections of some of the early instructors and the colorful approaches which they brought to trades education in his institution; although unsophisticated in their approach to instruction, some of these individuals demonstrated remarkable insight in their relationships with learners. Despite their use of crude expressions and other unorthodox conventions, Dan could see a commitment to the learners that showed through the instructors' somewhat unwashed practices. In Dan's view, these veteran tradesmen knew that they had to "connect" with the learners in order to effectively fulfill a mentorship role. In making the transition from industry to the college program, the instructors brought with them their crude expressions, jokes, and storytelling practices which had been developed within their occupational community (in the workplace). From his years of experience, Dan knew his trade as something much more than an accumulation of procedural knowledge, and intuitively he knew that he had to keep this foremost in his relations with his learners if they were to find possibilities of vocation in the trade. In Dan's words, instructors must strive to make the curriculum come alive for the learners, and to do this effectively requires a deep and personal investment in their teaching practice so that it may become truly inspirational. Relational qualities then, provide the bridge through which instructors can connect with their learners, thereby making sense out of the technical or procedural knowledge that is commonly mistaken for the real substance of a trade.

Dan's preoccupation with humor and storytelling can be understood as something much more than a particular bent to instruction or an innovative approach to enhancing learner motivation. In his commitment to "bringing to life" the study of his trade, Dan draws our attention to the human side of trade practice — those dimensions related to what it is like for people to work in a trade. Unlike many of the other tradespeople who shared their stories in this study, Dan's concern for his trade is not limited to the technological aspects or even the demands of the labor market; instead, he has a deeper understanding which includes a concern for what it is like to be a tradesperson. If he is successful in bringing to life the study of his trade, then his learners will have an opportunity to experience, in a personal way, life in the trade.

emerging themes on agogic relationships

ethics of craft and ethics of andragogy — to be a vocational educator is to act in a caring and responsible way for one's craft community as well as for those who wish to live in this community

professional ethics — to be a vocational educator is to commit oneself to an agogic existence. It is to live for others in their "becoming" both in a vocational and personal way.

the agogical relation is personal and inspirational — to teach a vocation is to show possibilities from one's own life. It is to illustrate a richness of experience that draws the novices forward into their own vocational journeys.

CHAPTER 8:

STORIES ABOUT TEACHING AS A VOCATION

In this chapter, the final two stories are presented, bringing to a close my dialogue with the men and women who, for the purpose of this study, shared their experiences as trades instructors. While all of the stories in the four preceding chapters relate in some way to the possibilities of vocation for trades instructors, the two stories in this chapter can be seen as somewhat more pointed than the earlier stories with respect to their relevance to the subject of vocationalism in trades teaching. These stories show two very different but not necessarily contradictory ways of understanding what it means to be a trades instructor in a postsecondary educational institution. Through an examination of these stories it is possible to gain some insight into possibilities for developing a sense of vocation through teaching in the trades.

Bruce's story about ending a trades career

The first story in this chapter is told by Bruce, the plumbing instructor whom we met in first story in Chapter 1. His experience in the trade was developed from a number of perspectives ranging from his upbringing in a trades family and then progressing to various functions in the family-owned plumbing business which he eventually came to manage. Bruce's final career transition was to a plumbing instructor's position in a large community college where he has spent over twenty years. To add one further dimension to his experience with the trade, in the early 1980s Bruce's son decided to follow the family tradition by registering as a plumber's apprentice. With three generations of his family involved in the plumbing trade. Bruce reflects on his experiences with tradesmen in various stages of their careers and more particularly as they approach the latter decade or two of working life.

> *Actually, I ended my career at the tools by working mainly in the shop as opposed to out on the job site. In the early sixties, the company started to get a little bit smaller, times got a bit tougher, and the boss, my dad, left to go out-of-province to be a federal government inspector. We still kept it a family company; I was left to run it in what you might almost call it's dying days, which leads to how I ended up being an instructor because things were getting pretty bad and by then I was looking around too.*
>
> *Well, here again, the latter part of my trade experience was spent doing a lot of estimating. I didn't end up being the chief construction foreman, but back in those days I had a little bit better education than most with my grade twelve and a year of university. I was a reasonably well educated tradesman, you might say, because most of us back in those days only had grade eight or nine, to tell you the truth. Anyways, I took to estimating; I was reasonably good at it, so I did a lot of it in those days, plus some general office work. I even ended up doing the books at the end. So I had both sides: the managerial side and the worker's side. But, as I said, the company was going downhill.*
>
> *It was mainly the economic times, plus an up-and-coming, thriving company that became our competition — they were pretty fierce competition and they were fresh into it. We also had the sad misfortune to pick up a big contract with the federal government*

that we seriously under-bid. Thankfully, I had nothing to do with estimating that job [laughing] but we lost a pile of money up there, and that just broke our back! Like I said, when the boss left and I was running the company, we were so deep into the banks. When you go to the bank Friday afternoon for the payroll, and they say, "What's your payroll?" and it's X number of dollars, you say, "Fine, here it is." and the rest goes into back debts, it's pretty discouraging. We just began to pull our hair and finally said, "Forget it." I just called in the accountant and put the lock on the door. Which is too bad, because we had been making out okay but a couple of bad jobs, especially bigger jobs, broke us. We over-stepped ourselves there I think and it really broke us!

Right after that time, the boss, he was about my age now — his mid-fifties, I guess he could see the writing on the wall, so when the nice big government job came up and they offered it to him, he took it. So he ended up okay too. He got himself a pretty good government job, which is something that I suppose most journeyman tradesmen wouldn't look down their noses at. Inspectors, government jobs, you know, once you get your journeyman certificate, these are some of opportunities that are open to you.

But then when you're younger you would never think of leaving the trade. There was a day, I suppose, I could envisage myself being a tradesman for the rest of my life, except that since then I've had some back problems, and I just couldn't see myself fifty, sixty years old, all dirty and tired and bent over the tools. I guess after that little bit of administrative work that I did, I just *decided to get out of the actual "on the tools" business. In most of the construction trades, this notion is reasonably prevalent. You don't see all that many journeymen in their fifties still working at the tools. I can think of some of the guys I worked with, they came and worked out of our shop but now they're inspectors either for the city or for the government. Yeah, that is fairly prevalent in the construction trades that are sort of hard on the body. Oh, on some union jobs you might see a few older journeymen still in there. They can get storekeeper jobs or straight estimating jobs or, you know, running the tool shed or something like that. That's usually where these older journeymen get to. You get into your fifties, you can't lift the loads or maintain the high physical output like young kids can. Nobody can, nor should they expect you to.*

Then there's the superintendents and stuff like that, which is a natural progression too. But by the same token, there are a lot of guys that get right out of the actual physical work and get inspection jobs or whatever. Once you've got yourself fifteen or twenty years in the trade, it's a little unusual for you to say, "I think I'll go and be a brain surgeon or banker or something like that." My young brother is a bit of an exception. He was still in his mid-thirties when he gave up his trade and went into nursing! But most guys, once you've started in the trade and invested that many years, you stay with it or something quite related. Not that you mind working at the tools because it's pretty good money.

But you shouldn't get the idea that you have to be an older, seasoned journeymen to land the cushier jobs. Take my son, for instance. He works up north at a big pulp and paper mill. He *makes sixty thousand dollars a year, which blows his old dad's salary away. He's making twenty-two-something an hour at a maintenance job! Not that maintenance jobs are sort of like the retirement home, but like a lot of the mines around here or pulp mills and things like that, or bigger hospitals, they have maintenance tradesmen. For that you usually get into your forties or you've done your share of slogging around the country on construction jobs, and you want to sort of relax and do a steady job which is usually a little bit lesser pay but it's forty hour week and good benefits and that. I was quite surprised, it was about two-and-a-half years ago when my son put his application into the mill; they did a bunch of interviewing and they gave him the job. It's a little unusual. I guess he was about twenty-eight or so. A little unusual for a guy that young to settle into a maintenance job. Usually, like I said, younger guys would rather be out ramming around the country.*

Myself, I didn't mind getting into a place like the school here. As I intimated, I've got three crushed disks. My back was more or less shot, so I couldn't envisage myself forty or fifty years old still working on construction sites, so the fact that it would be easier on my back, although it may be harder on the brain, but that part I must say appealed to me. I wasn't going to be able to stay at the tools for too long. I could see that coming. I'm sure that a lot of guys are forced to being an inspector or instructor because their bodies played out. It's a natural progression for older, more experienced guys.

a hermeneutic reading of Bruce's story

In this story we are afforded an opportunity to examine how Bruce and some of his colleagues in the plumbing trade approached the latter part of their trades careers and how the nature of their association with the trade evolved to reflect their own vocational development as well as the changing conditions of the workplace. The story shows that there are different ways to engage in the trades, and as illustrated in Bruce's case, many of these options take on added meaning as economic and other forces continue to impact on industry and its workers.

Bruce indicates that after achieving journeyman status and a well-rounded exposure to the plumbing trade, he found that his duties in the family-owned company increasingly involved estimating, a critical task reserved primarily for senior tradesmen with substantial experience and proven judgement. Bruce was not adverse to this specialization in his work; he knew that his high school diploma and university studies distinguished him as the most suited employee in the company for a sophisticated but crucial task like estimating, and he was certainly not unhappy to get away from the more mundane plumbing duties. There is an indication in Bruce's comments suggesting that there are specific functions or duties like estimating that should be reserved for the veterans who have put in their time in the performance of routine trade work and who have earned a promotion to more "managerial" responsibilities. In Bruce's case, this meant not only taking responsibility for estimating but also for bookkeeping, general office work, and finally the overall management of the family business. But while performance of these managerial or business-related aspects of the trade offered welcome relief from the more typical trade functions, they also carried with them much greater responsibility; mistakes made in the conduct of these duties could prove costly, as was the case with Bruce's family business and the under-bid federal government contract. Bruce notes the irony in that particular situation: in terms of actual trade performance, he thought his company was quite successful, but from a business perspective, he had to admit failure.

The closure of the family business led to a consideration of other career opportunities for both Bruce and his father. In his father's case, an attractive opportunity in the form of *a nice big government job* appeared — a gas inspector's position which was viewed by Bruce as a windfall, the kind of opportunity that most senior tradesmen would dream about. He sees positions like this as just reward for veteran tradesmen who "paid their dues" through years of *working on the tools*, and he notes that most tradesmen *wouldn't look down their noses* at such opportunities.

Recalling how his father chose to leave behind the failing business to take a cushy government position, Bruce acknowledges that certain opportunities only seem to make sense at particular times in one's life. For instance, when he was a young man and relatively new in the trade, he would have considered an inspector's job as too boring and routine; in his experience *younger guys would rather be out ramming around the country*, making high wages on overtime shifts and living in construction camps. But in time, Bruce's outlook changed, particularly after incurring a back injury: *there was a day, I suppose, I could envisage myself being a tradesman for the rest of my life, except that since then I've had some back problems (I've got three crushed disks; my back was more or less shot), and I just couldn't see myself fifty, sixty years old, all dirty and tired and bent over the tools.* With a permanent spinal injury, Bruce determined that he had no choice but to find a less physically demanding way to work in his trade; in his language, he had to get away from the tools. He notes that this is not uncommon in the construction trades: *you don't see all* *that many journeymen in their fifties still working at the tools.* Aside from a few lighter jobs like storekeeping, tending tool cribs, and estimating, most assignments in the trades are simply too physically demanding for older tradesmen. Although there is good money in *working at the tools*, most tradesmen with fifteen or twenty years experience are wise to look for more managerial-type positions like his father did. Bruce sees such mid-career change as part of a natural progression in the trades: a decade or two of hard work and high pay and then a promotion to a privileged, senior position.

As Bruce points out, there is a price to pay for the decade or two of hard work and high pay associated with working at the tools. By middle-age, many tradespeople have reached their physical limits. Their bodies can no longer endure the physical demands of trade practice as the years of strain and unavoidable injuries eventually accumulate. The theme of "body" emerges again, this time to set the limits of trade practice in the same fashion that the senile mind marks the decline of an academic career. But like athletes, craftspeople must confront these limits imposed by the body relatively early in life and by middle-age they need to think about alternatives to normal trade practice.

Bruce notes, however, that some people (like his son) are circumventing the natural order of progression through the trade by winning cushy maintenance jobs without having invested even a decade in trade practice. Bruce takes pride in his son whom he considers smart for opting for a steady and secure position instead of pursuing high wages and getting physically wrecked on the construction crews. Bruce would have likely made a similar decision if the same choices had been available to him back in the sixties. However, such was not the case and so Bruce turned to a teaching opportunity instead. He knew that his back injury would not allow him to practice his trade much longer, so the choice, as he expressed it, *to use his brain instead of his back* made good sense to him.

In his discussion of the dilemma facing tradesmen who have reached a point in their careers where they can no longer maintain what might be seen as typical involvement, Bruce indicates that opportunities are indeed restricted. For the few older tradesmen who choose to remain in industry *working at the tools*, options are limited to positions like storekeepers or tool crib attendants; while assignments like these may be viewed as somewhat privileged because of the less physically demanding nature of the work, they are not necessarily considered prestigious. Similar opportunities exist outside of the construction industry where seasoned tradesmen can sometimes locate institutional jobs in plant maintenance — positions that often provide both security and high pay. Other attractive options involve getting away from the tools and taking on more managerial functions such as those related to estimating or project management, functions which provide a natural lead-in to owning a business. But the most attractive career options, in Bruce's view, are those associated with government or public interest — jobs like inspectors and instructors. Positions like these are prized for a number of reasons, not the least of which include pay, security, and status. Associated with jobs like these is a larger responsibility for the trade and the industry; indeed, individuals filling these public roles are often seen as leaders in their fields.

Russ' story about living a vocation

The final story is told by Russ, the head of an electrical construction program at a community college. As is the case with many other trades programs in the institution, one of the features of this particular program is that it accommodates a large number of apprentices who return annually to the college for two-month periods of studies. Beginning in late Fall and extending to early Spring, the electrical construction program is filled to capacity with returning apprentices, a situation which requires the recruitment of a number of short-term, temporary instructors. Russ enjoys the challenges and excitement of the hectic Fall-Winter term, and he finds a particular challenge in staffing the program during its peak periods. The constantly recurring need to attract and develop suitable instructors for his program causes Russ to reflect on the kinds of tradesmen whom he sees as the most appropriate for the instructor's role. Less directly, he reflects also on the essential nature of that role.

> *We have some young instructors in our department — I can just tell from observation and their personal motivation — they really do impress me. I can see that they've got the welfare of the students at heart. You stop for lunch break and you'll see a guy like that, there'll be a small group of students sitting on the bench in the corridor, and the guy will be standing there just talking about general stuff, during noon hour. You can see the guy cares. He has the welfare of the students at heart. He genuinely likes them and he likes being with them. There is an aura that exudes from a guy like that. He's not just there for thirty or forty thousand dollars a year or it's a nice warm building. You know that! The guy's proud of his trade and he cares about the kinds of young people who go into it.*
>
> *Then there's another instructor in our department; he's a guy who takes stuff home at night. I see him hawking it home. And he's right up on all his courses. He does a lot of work at night at home on his own. And he's only a labor service guy (part-time); he's*

only hired for six months of the year. People always say that that's the trouble with the labor service we have nowadays; once they leave here in May or June or whatever, it's "To hell with you, I'm not doing any work at home. When I come in September, tell me what you want me to teach. Give me the stuff." Not this guy; he does impress me. I know he's got his heart in it and he loves his trade. Anyway, he obviously loves the trade and wants to contribute to it over the long run. That guy does a lot of work on his own. He takes stuff home and does most of the course development; he's not even a permanent employee! He's not just doing it for the dollar; he's looking to the future. He does impress me. I would never tell him that though, [laughing]; he can be a bit obnoxious. Well, I guess I do tell him that in a round-about way because I keep recommending that he be hired back the next fall. He knows he's doing a good job and so he's just a little bit cocky. Some of the other instructors feel a bit left behind because he has so much spark, but I know he's doing a good job, and he makes an impression because I don't have to chase his ass all the time. I know he can look after his apprentices.

It's generally true in the trades areas anyway: the great majority of the guys I've seen come and go over the years, by far the majority really, really enjoy what they're doing, you know, further their trade or however you want to say it. They're basically happy. And you basically would have to have a love of your trade or you wouldn't be able to impart that to your students. So, anyway, the bunch of us in the industrial area, certainly the manufacturing and *construction trades, have a good time together as far as getting along at work and socializing and whatever.*

Our coffee breaks, to tell you the truth, are shop talk, like "What should we do about this? What should we do about that?" We, within our department, never have staff meetings, well rarely. Maybe once a year if some special crisis comes up or a decision is needed. I would have to say to the guys, "I have to meet you at 3:30; we have to spend some time talking about something." But rarely do we have to do that because we all have coffee together, as a matter of fact, in a room in the shop. It's not down in the lounge with all the rest of the people in the school.

Unfortunately, you might say, we do talk shop all the time. Not that we have to, but because we want to. For one thing, you've got a group of students and you're alone with them for the majority of the day, and maybe you get some doubts about something and so you say to the guys at coffee, "Geez guys, what are we going to do, because at the end of this I have to give an exam . . ." So we get talking like this and we all make these decisions together, and it feels good. And nobody says, "Oh for Christ sake, let's tell a joke or let's talk about sports or whatever." Nobody says that.

I said earlier that the trades instructors are a pretty happy bunch, unlike a lot of other divisions in this school. Well, maybe its reverse snobbery but the trades-type people are more down to earth types; maybe they're not the academics, maybe they're the worker bees of society, whatever. To me they're a happier type of people. Especially in the construction trades, they've grown up on the job where there is a lot of camaraderie and joking around. They have a

> *career already, they're accomplished tradesmen, and when they come here it's not really a switch in careers, it's more like an expansion of their careers. But like I said, I don't know.*

a hermeneutic reading of Russ' story

In contrast to some of the trades instructors who we met in earlier stories, Russ points to some of the younger staff members in his department for exemplary performance as instructors. He is impressed with the way in which some of the young instructors commit themselves to their learners and the trade, examples of which are clearly evident both in the structured learning setting and beyond. It is particularly in out-of-class situations that Russ detects strong indications of how deeply some instructors care for their learners; he points to instances such as when certain instructors voluntarily spend their lunch breaks chatting informally with the learners. To Russ, such commitments are illustrations of caring: *You can see the guy cares. He has the welfare of the students at heart. He genuinely likes them and he likes being with them.* Although Russ cannot identify specifically what he sees transpiring between instructor and learners in these situations, he feels certain that there is some aura that surrounds the instructor. Russ is confident too that these particular instructors are drawn by higher motives than salary or job security; he is certain that their purpose is related to a pride in the trade and a concern for the young people who will sustain and develop its traditions. What Russ leaves unsaid is his suspicion that, unlike these young instructors, there are others in his department who took up teaching primarily for the money and security — the *thirty or forty thousand dollars a year* and the *nice warm building.*

The other quality among instructors to which Russ draws particular attention could probably best be captured as commitment or dedication to the trade. As an illustration, he points to one of the seasonal or *labor-service* instructors who typically joins the program staff for the six-month Fall/Winter period when most of the apprentices return to the college for the "institutional component" of their training. What impresses Russ about this particular instructor is the enthusiasm and initiative which he demonstrates in preparing for his teaching. While seasonal staff often have the reputation of trying to get by with fulfilling the minimal terms of their contracts, this particular instructor seems eager to invest himself for the good of the program, a situation which draws some animosity from some of the other instructors in the program who feel somewhat threatened or left behind by his youthful energies.

In reflecting on the instructors with whom he has worked in the trades division over the years, Russ observes that most of them seemed genuinely happy in their educational roles. In contemplating the matter further he concludes that it is unlikely that instructors could be very effective in their teaching if they were not happy in their trade. He states: *the great majority of the guys I've seen come and go over the years, by far the majority really, really enjoy what they're doing . . . you basically would have to have a love of your trade or you wouldn't be able to impart that to your students.* Russ sees respect for the trade and respect for co-workers as essential qualities reflected in the trades programs, something which sets them apart from many of the other program areas in the community college.

Although Russ maintains a rather informal approach to the management of departmental affairs — admitting that he seldom holds formal staff meetings — he explains that this does not mean, however, that departmental business is treated casually. On the contrary, he points out that program matters seem to dominate most conversations in the department, often spilling over into coffee breaks and other informal situations. He notes that the constant *shop talk* provides a necessary way for instructors to try to overcome the lack of contact among colleagues which many educators experience; as Russ states, *you've got a group of students and you're alone with them for the majority of the day, and maybe you've got some doubts about something . . .* The informal shop talk seems to be a natural extension of industrial practice whereby workers take advantage of their breaks to discuss current problems or concerns, something that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish during the performance of typical work functions.

In part, Russ indicates that the informal but contented disposition that seems to characterize the trades programs is a natural carry-over from industry where, he notes, there was always *a lot of camaraderie and joking around.* He also points out that the trades instructors can afford to be less assuming than some of their more academic counterparts in other areas of the college where a more guarded or elevated attitude seems so typical. In his terms, the trades instructors might take some pride in portraying themselves *as the worker-bees of society* thus absolving themselves of many institutional problems and concerns that should be left to those who see themselves in more elevated terms. Russ concludes his story with the observation that for accomplished tradesmen, teaching does not represent a new career but rather an extension of trade practice. But unless he might be challenged on this point, he retreats quickly to his "down-to-earth worker-bee" position by adding that he is only a tradesman, so his views should not be taken too seriously: *like I said, I don't know.*

further perspectives on teaching as a vocation

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, the two stories presented here show very different ways of understanding what it means to be a trades instructor. In the first instance (as recounted in Bruce's story), teaching represents one of the few alternatives available to tradespeople who wish to leave or go beyond the typical practice of their trade; in this sense, teaching represents something "one goes to" in order to get out of or go beyond regular trade practice. In the second instance, Russ talks about some of the younger instructors in his department who have come into teaching while still in the prime of their trades careers, not as a way to get out of the trade but as a different way to practice or contribute to the trade. One of Russ' colleagues, the young labor service (part-time) instructor, shows that it is possible to be an instructor as well as a practicing tradesman, a feat which he accomplishes by oscillating between roles in industry and the college.

In Bruce's story we see an illustration of what might be considered a rather conventional or common-sense understanding of vocational educators. It is a view which begins with the notion that in order to be an effective trades teacher, one must first learn the trade and then practice it until a rich bank of experience has been acquired. This was a rather common theme in some of the earlier stories; as expressed by one trades instructor: *we are all people who went out and did it, and now we've come back to talk about it.* In this story, Bruce develops this theme further, showing that many tradesmen find it increasingly difficult if not impossible to practice their trades much beyond mid-career because of the physical demands of their work. He notes how rare it is to find tradesmen in their fifties or sixties still active in industry; more appropriately, they should have moved on the various options that await senior members of the trade. In this light, typical trade practice (what Bruce refers to as *working at the tools*) is only appropriate for tradesmen while they are young and strong, and after a decade or two, it is reasonable to leave the tools and move on to more "senior" functions, many of which reflect "managerial" or "professional" qualities.

The concept of moving beyond a rank and file position as one accumulates years or even decades of experience in a field is certainly not unique to the trades; most occupations or professions reserve special avenues through which the talents and experience of veterans can be appropriately used and recognized. But as Bruce points out, the number of available avenues in his trade is rather limited, and by mid-career most tradesmen have no choice but to seek alternatives to working at the tools. In this search, some options are definitely more prized than others. In his own case, he feels very fortunate to have landed an instructor's position. Similarly, he was pleased when his father was hired as a government gas inspector and when his son was chosen for the maintenance staff in a pulp mill.

To Bruce, teaching represents one of the few "good" mid-career options for senior members of his trade, ranking near the top along with government positions and institutional maintenance jobs. We sense that Bruce finds a similar attraction among these three types of positions, and in his own situation, if it had been a government inspector's position or a plant maintenance position that had come available at the time of his business closure, it is quite possible that he would not be teaching today. There is no indication that he sees himself any differently than his father or his son, both of whom share in what Bruce considers the upper echelons of trade practice. Nor is there any mention of special personal qualities that might draw a tradesman towards one option over another. Quite simply, teaching is one of the better alternatives that await seasoned tradesmen who have "put in their time" at the tools; it represents an appropriate way of maintaining involvement in the trade that draws on past experience and personal maturity.

In the second story Russ shows that there are other ways to approach being a trades instructor — ways which do not necessarily relate to finding suitable involvement for the "twilight" of a trades career. In contrast to the tenor of Bruce's story, Russ is most impressed with some of his younger instructors who seem to be drawn to teaching as a way of being in the world as opposed to an alternative to working at the tools. Russ knows that it is not the extrinsic rewards of salary and security that brings these tradesmen to instructional positions but rather something much deeper and personal. While he struggles to articulate what he sees in these young instructors, he can detect a certain aura or presence about them as they accompany their learners; he can see that these instructors *like students and like being with students.* Russ understands their relationships with others in the program as built on "care" — care for the learners as young adults, care for their colleagues as they endeavor to continue their development as educators, and care for the future of the trade.

What impresses Russ most about his young colleagues is the apparent commitment to others that shows through their practice. In Russ' view, such commitment is made possible by a definite pride in the trade and in the way of life associated with trade practice. In this light, teaching a trade is much more than a comfortable way to fill in the latter part of a trades career — it is a way of being in the world that invites others to explore and possibly follow this way. To these instructors, teaching is not viewed simply as one of the more attractive mid-career options available to experienced tradesmen; instead, it is understood as a special way of relating to the trade and to the people who take up that trade. It is a way of being that draws its meaning from providing care and taking responsibility for others who choose a particular of engaging with the world.

emerging themes on teaching as a vocation

limits of the body are limits of craft as practical knowledge — to engage in craftwork is to be confronted by the limitations of our humanness. It is to acknowledge physical limits which cause us to redirect our relationships with our practice.

vocation must be lived — it means to stand in life with diligence and humility. It is a commitment to others (a community) which must endure in the face of our own humanness (vulnerability). To acknowledge our vulnerability is to be down-to-earth.

CHAPTER 9:

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FURTHER INQUIRY

The central focus of this inquiry was the practice of adult vocational education as reflected in everyday experiences of men and women who work in this rather distinct branch of education. Through conversations with eleven educators, all of whom were seasoned trades instructors in postsecondary vocational institutions, it was possible to gain access to some of the personal experiences which give meaning to their particular way of being in the world. These conversations opened avenues through which others can share the storytellers' life experiences as vocational educators and reflect on the sometimes subtle and other times apparent meanings contained therein.

Conversations with my co-inquirers, the eleven trades instructors, were extensive and wide-ranging as together we endeavored to probe from various perspectives the experience of being a vocational instructor. In the natural discourse of everyday language, the text of the conversations was gathered and preserved, first on audio tape and then in written transcripts. Over the course of twelve months, as the eleven trades instructors warmed to the invitation to re-live some of their personal experiences, the text grew to voluminous scale. Finally, to reduce or distill the resulting texts to more approachable and understandable "units" that could facilitate subsequent analysis (hermeneutic examination), the richest or most powerful portions of the conversations that seemed to convey personal meanings most effectively and powerfully were isolated and preserved as stories.

The narrative knowledge derived from these stories shows what particular experiences were like for the instructors who shared their stories while at the same time showing possibilities for others who engage in the world as vocational instructors. The stories and their themes transcend the uniqueness of the individual instructors' lives to represent possible shared or intersubjective meanings that would be impossible without the example of the individual. This is not to say, however, that there was a great deal of commonality among the instructors' stories or that the recounted experiences showed common meanings. Conversely, there were definite unique qualities and themes within all of the instructor stories, some of which seemed to stand in direct contrast or opposition to others. These divergent meanings were particularly valued for the manner in which they illustrated different possibilities in understanding the way that vocational educators stand in life. In some respects, it was the strong sense of individuality within each of the eleven participating instructors that contributed to the richness of their stories. Regardless of the experience in question — whether it was beginning a trades career, growing from apprentice to journeyman, learning the instructor role, or leaving the trade altogether — the instructors showed that there are multiple ways of living the life of a vocational educator. In every chapter, at least two apparently different perspectives were offered on the phenomenon under examination, and we can be confident that still other perspectives remain untold.

Through hermeneutic dialogue with the stories, attempts were made to see the recounted experiences in their most potential forms, what phenomenological researchers might call a strong interpretation. Through strong readings we refuse to settle for a face-value interpretation of experience, preferring instead to inquire in a hermeneutic way into possibilities and pitfalls that might lie buried within a particular way of life. So the stories were not simply read; rather, they were examined — probed, rotated, and held up to the light in attempts to reveal their deep and essential structures. Such examination could not be accomplished from a detached, objective position. Instead, it required not only careful reading, but also thoughtful wondering, questioning, as well as writing and rewriting to open the possibilities residing within the instructors' experiences.

I mentioned in the opening chapter that questions about meaning constitute a special form of inquiry because they cannot be answered neatly and succinctly and then set aside once and for all as if the undertaking has been finished. To some, there is something unsettling about this notion, since it leaves the research undertaking in a state of incompletion. But if we acknowledge that to be human is to be incomplete, then the unending task of studying our "being human" is a necessary part of our continued development. Obviously the inquiry into the meaning of vocational education cannot be considered complete; more appropriately, it represents only a beginning, an acknowledgement that a formal inquiry has been initiated and that some preliminary observations have been made. Turning briefly to a recapitulation of some of the more dominant themes of the inquiry, it should be recognized that the necessary incompleteness of this kind of inquiry poses these themes more in a questioning or tentative manner than as conclusive findings. That is to say that the recapitulation which follows serves not only to mark the important lessons drawn from the stories but also to invite further inquiry into this important area of human endeavor.

recapitulation

From the hermeneutic reading of the trades instructors' stories, a number of themes related to the meaning of vocational education were identified and then captured more explicitly in the concluding section of each chapter. Recognizing that this discussion was spread over five chapters (and 125 pages), a more holistic or relational view of the themes might be obtained by bringing them together in one frame. Shown below are the fifteen themes in the order in which they were uncovered through the hermeneutic discussion of the instructors' stories.

hand work or body work

commitment and pride

aesthetic relation to one's materials, tools, and products

tacit knowledge and the theory-practice balance

the relational quality of apprenticeship

dependence/independence of the craftsperson

the primacy of agogic interests

the articulation of tacit knowledge

academic knowledge and practical skills

professionalism/ professionalization

ethics of craft and ethics of andragogy

professional ethics

the agogical relation is personal and inspirational

limits of the body are limits of craft as practical knowledge

vocation must be lived

Since these themes were identified and treated as they emerged from the stories, there is no deliberate or applied sequence in their presentation above. But on closer examination (particularly with some recollection of the earlier hermeneutic discussion), there are obviously some common threads that draw these themes together into clusters or groupings. For instance, a number of themes pertain to *the body*, as reflected in terms like "body work," "tacit knowledge," and "practical skills." Similarly, a second thematic grouping can be formed around *agogic concerns*, and a third group settles around the nucleus of *vocation*. Listed below are the fifteen themes organized into thematic groupings.

themes of body and body knowledge	*hand work or body work*
	tacit knowledge and the theory-practice balance
	the articulation of tacit knowledge
	academic knowledge and practical skills
	limits of the body are limits of craft as practical knowledge
themes of agogic concern	*the primacy of agogic interests*
	the relational quality of apprenticeship
	dependence/independence of the craftsperson
	the agogic relation is personal and inspirational
themes of vocation	*commitment and pride*
	aesthetic relation to one's materials, tools, and products
	professionalism/professionalization
	ethics of craft and ethics of andragogy
	professional ethics
	vocation must be lived

The point in arranging the thematic groupings is to facilitate the connection or potential relationship that exists among the individual themes. In considering these three clusters, it is obvious that they not only speak to essential meanings of vocational education but that they also provide a vantage point from which implications for practice as well as some possibilities for further inquiry in this field can be considered. With these possibilities in mind, I turn briefly to each of the thematic groupings.

themes of body and body knowledge

The themes which emerged in this study with greatest clarity and prominence were those pertaining to the body and embodied knowledge. To work in the trades (as well as in many other occupations which are related to trade or craft work) is to engage in physical work. It is essentially through bodily involvement that tradespeople bring their work efforts to bear on the world. In short, it is how they get things done; it is the essence and the final manifestation of their practice. But to reduce trade or craft work to nothing more than physical effort is to reduce it to an older, outmoded form of labor in its most debased form while at the same time succumbing to the false dichotomy of mind-body dualism.

Part of the problem facing vocational education (and possibly reflected to an even greater extent in liberal education) is the elevated priority given by educational leaders and researchers to academic knowledge and academic ways of knowing. This preoccupation with the intellect, which is probably portrayed most clearly at the university but increasingly in other areas of education, has the effect of drawing attention away from other ways of knowing, particularly those which are associated more with affect or somatically-rooted forms of knowing. Consequently, body skills and embodied knowledge come to be too easily ignored and left as the purview of the academically untalented.

What needs to be better understood among educators is that to dissociate ourselves from physical competence and more particularly from the development of embodied knowledge is to remove ourselves from an essentially human form of being and becoming. Interestingly, the pursuit of physical ideals is preserved and even promoted in areas like sports and the arts, but the same appreciation for physical involvement in human work has not been sustained except in some rather special cases, many of which are associated with high status occupational endeavors like medical practice. A challenge facing educators is to encourage a renewal of interest and respect for physical knowledge as possibly one of the most essential forms of human knowing and one which gives meaning and purpose to other forms. To ignore this challenge will be to embrace the continued over-determination of theoretical knowledge — a trend that will undoubtedly foster an even further devaluation of "non-professional" work as well as the people who perform it.

As a field that has long been dominated by the traditions of natural scientific thought, vocational education as practiced in North America has epitomized not only an acceptance but a commitment to the theory-practice separation. Entrenched through curriculum movements like competency based education and enshrined in institutions built on this ethic of instrumentality, a production metaphor for education has evolved in which practice is understood as the application of theory — procedural algorithms which emanate from the technological translation of scientific theory. In this view, the role of theory is to drive practice. Not surprisingly, purveyors of theory are held in an elevated light in contrast with the practitioners whose singular function is to follow and refine the procedures laid out by their theoretical masters. Acceptance of this subordinate position has left vocational educators with little more to concern themselves than polishing their procedural training routines in hopes of extracting further gains in efficiency (in accordance with the production metaphor). The entrenchment of the theory-practice separation does not readily accommodate a renewal of respect for practical performance and practical knowledge, and so vocational educators must replace this old and limiting dichotomy with a more basic understanding of their practice — one which stems from their lived experiences as craftspeople.

To effect a return to a more original and authentic basis for vocational education requires that we not only acknowledge the central importance of physical work but that we embrace it as a fundamentally human way of engaging in the world. To act consciously and skillfully in the creation of our immediate world is to act in the most human of ways. But physical work is always more than bodily motions and exertions and the like; it is a complex integration of movements, ideas, judgements, feelings, memories, images, aspirations, touchings, sensations, and so on, only part of which can be described or explained even by the most experienced of practitioners. This aspect of skills which escapes articulation is what Molander (1992) refers to as tacit or silenced knowledge; veteran practitioners know what they can do but the capacity to articulate their skills is often beyond them. Perhaps the notion of applied art needs further consideration. Smith (1992) notes that, historically, the great value in indentureship arrangements has been the development of a prolonged and intensive relationship through which this silent knowledge can grow between master and apprentice (probably without ever being fully articulated). In vocational education's recent transition to school-based arrangements, relationships between instructors and learners can no longer sustain the affects of the master-apprentice relations (neither in terms of duration or in quality), and so contemporary vocational educators need to make a much greater commitment to consciously understanding the nature of tacit knowledge and its importance in the development of craft competence.

While the bodily aspects of trades or crafts as well as many other occupational fields offer exciting and creative dimensions for human work, these same bodily dimensions also represent the downside. As mentioned in some of the stories (particularly in Bruce's last story), the failing body signals the decline of active practice for many tradespersons. What might be considered as representing a mid-career stage in many occupations often represents a critical juncture for tradespeople who must either find physically less demanding roles, like superintendents or inspectors, or consider alternatives outside of trade work altogether. As in the case of professional athletes, limits to practice are imposed by limitations of the body at a time when accumulated experience and wisdom would seem to offer the most promise for important contributions to practice. To leave behind a decade or two of practice to search for a new vocation is to acknowledge a futility in that former way of life. It would seem that a more developmental approach would be to acknowledge the personal and social value of that earlier experience by building on it as the basis for further vocational growth. Vocational educators, employers and others committed to the ideals of work reform need to be concerned with ways of facilitating the extension of careers that would be otherwise curtailed by bodily limitations. To discard years of valuable practice is to demean the life of those who cannot continue in their chosen field of work. Some "retired" athletes continue in their fields as coaches or managers, just as some middle-aged tradespeople found their ways into teaching or superintendent roles, but to many others, the fear of having to give up a chosen career is very real.

themes of agogic concern

Something that was shown repeatedly in the instructor stories was the complexity of the field of vocational education with its various vested interest groups and their competing objectives and ideologies. With the involvement of employer groups, labor unions, professional associations, government agencies, political and economic representatives, and finally educators and learners, there is constant danger of learner interests being displaced by larger social issues. Perhaps the most blatant illustration occurs when apprentices and other on-the-job-learners are exploited as a form of cheap labor rather than as fledgling practitioners who need support and guidance in their development. Without raising the numerous other economic and political motives that can detract from the necessary and potentially rich experience of an individual's vocational development, vocational educators need to recognize their responsibility in safeguarding and promoting the agogic interests of their learners. Employers and many others who are involved in vocational education can be excused at times if they lose sight of learner interests, but vocational educators can never allow other interests to take precedence over their learners' development. Attentive and vigilant, vocational educators must screen out the larger noises of various interest groups in order to keep an ear tuned to the individual learner voices that call them in their vocation. Economic and political pressures, while ever present, must be kept in the background. To fail in this regard is to abandon the very essence of what it means to be educators.

In the face of competing societal interests and the press for new kinds of workers with new and varied abilities, an approach which never seems to fade completely from the training scene is apprenticeship. While trends like college-based programing have gained popularity throughout much of the industrialized world in the last few decades, there is an unmistakable sentiment that something critical has been lost in the drift away from indentureship arrangements (Smith 1992). A number of the stories carried reference to this matter which was captured as the relational quality of apprenticeship. While there are various dimensions which lend to the importance of apprenticeship as an approach to vocational development, its central distinguishing feature is the relationship that emerges between master and apprentice. It is a special form of bondage that commits one to the other in the shared purpose of individual growth. The master's commitment to the novice is personal and at the same time formal, representing an acceptance of responsibility and care for the apprentice and for the continued development of the craft — what Kotre (1984) describes as "generativity."

As an agogic approach, apprenticeship represents a kind of relationship that is probably impossible to nurture in a typical classroom setting where an instructor's attention must be divided among attending to the participants, the curriculum, and a host of administrative responsibilities. Instead, apprenticeship involves a relationship that more typically grows between two people who share a commitment to making a developmental journey together. Educators in various fields (including higher education) have obviously recognized some value in apprenticeship as evidenced by the number of co-op programs and practica that have become commonplace, particularly in professional colleges. It is questionable whether these arrangements have evolved as administrative arrangements for ensuring an adequate theory-practice balance in the curriculum or whether there was some recognition of the deeper potential that exists within the master-apprentice relationship. As vocational educators persist with the practice of workplace training arrangements (in apprenticeship and other derived forms), the relational qualities reflected in traditional apprenticeship approaches need to be given greater attention. In this regard, there is something positive or hopeful about mourning the loss of the old-world craftsperson because it is an acknowledgement that an important aspect of vocational education has been given up. Central to any thoughts of reclaiming the notion of craft is the need to also revisit the approaches in which craftspeople were developed — a reconnaissance involving further exploration of the relational qualities of apprenticeship.

To ignore or downplay the relational aspects of teaching is to allow an educational endeavor to drift away from its developmental purpose. Inherent in the conception of human development is a notion of personal growth that begins from a state of helpless dependence and moves towards one of competence and independence — two qualities that have distinguished craftspeople through the ages. There are disturbing trends, however, that show up in contemporary vocational education and which tend to shift the focus away from the learners' vocational development in the rich, craft sense of the term. These trends can be found in recent curriculum models which are often promoted on the basis of systems theory or efficiency of outcomes — orientations in which simple procedural knowledge is easily confused with craft maturity. Maturation requires time; it is the result of development rather than systematic processes. The competence and independence which signal its gradual emergence grow from carefully guided experience, and it is the orchestration and accompaniment of this experience that calls vocational educators. Vocational educators must recognize that accompanying learners in their vocational development is a personal and deeply human way of being with others. It is way of relating that depends less on technical or curricular resources than on a commitment to act in a responsible and caring manner and to be guided solely by the learners' growth towards competence and independence.

themes of vocation

One of the features that distinguishes those themes pertaining to the notion of vocation is their subtlety. These themes speak in a quiet way about what it means to be called to a way of life that is not easily understood by those from the outside. Yet in many ways, these themes offer a very concrete base from which to consider implications for the improvement of vocational education practice. Perhaps what makes these themes somewhat different from the others is that they largely represent meanings that have been lost from much of our work in contemporary settings. Like warnings about endangered species, the stories presented in the study prompt us to reconsider current practices in light of recovering some fading meanings before they slip completely beyond our grasp.

Throughout many of the stories a theme that emerged repeatedly was the pursuit of quality in work. Despite various workplace pressures that seem to continually demand greater efficiencies and higher production, the ideals of high quality work have weathered somewhat but they are not lost completely. Apparent among many of the instructors is an uneasiness about what seems to be happening to their trades; current industrial trends appear to place greater priority on matters like economic competitiveness than on quality of work. Instructors often feel caught between industry's press for improved efficiencies of production and their own commitment and pride as craftspeople. They know full well what can happen if the industrial barons and the economic opportunists have their ways — the notion of craft or trade will be displaced with a leaner, more expedient view of work and workers. Technicians, quickly trained in large college programs or on factory floors, can be turned out *en masse* as labor demands arise and as easily retrained when opportunities shift. The concept of human resources is becoming increasingly popular. But where in this notion is there room for the ideals of commitment and pride among workers? Where is there a place for pursuing the aesthetic dimensions of one's work? Or must tradespeople give up these ideals and learn to live with purely technical roles?

Vocational educators have a critical role to play in sorting out this dilemma. Because of their situatedness — between industry on one hand and the learners on the other — vocational educators are strategically located to provide influence in both directions. To be a vocational educator is to be guided by professional ethics. As in other fields of education, these ethics stem from an abiding commitment to learners in their development towards competence and independence. This responsibility does not end when learners leave the program for employment purposes or when they finally receive their certification; it extends to the workplace where, hopefully, development in their vocation continues. From an ethical standpoint, their responsibility is to the learners and their continued vocational development. And it is from this same ethical standpoint that vocational educators are compelled to pursue work reform initiatives aimed at nurturing lifelong vocational development of workers. Educators need to take an active role in showing employers, managers, labor leaders, aspiring workers, and anyone concerned with workplace practices that the erosion of vocational possibilities means the deterioration of the value of work not only to working individuals but to society at large.

conclusion

To pursue a deeper understanding of vocational education as a field of practice is to confront at the outset its inextricable linkage to human work. Whether viewed in terms of guidance and support for individual development or from the larger societal perspective as an economic agent, vocational education as a distinct branch of education interprets its mission in terms of the demands and the opportunities of working life. Conversations about vocational education cannot occur without reference to human work any more than discussions about children's education can occur without reference to their future. But work is changing, and these changes in turn prompt questions of change to the practice of vocational education. Changing technology, changing approaches to work organizations, changing relationships with co-workers and employers, changing attitudes about work itself — what do these changes mean to vocational educators and how they approach their practice? Furthermore, the relationship between workplace change and vocational education must also be approached from another direction by inquiring into vocational educators' responsibility to foster needed changes in the ways we approach human work.

There was a lot of talk by the instructors in this study about "how it used to be" back when they were learning their trades, and there were numerous comparisons drawn between these earlier practices and prevailing trends today. While it was acknowledged by more than one instructor that recent innovations in materials and machines have made many aspects of trade work much easier, there is the unmistakable sentiment that something has been lost from the trades — these occupations are no longer what they used to be. As the aesthetic dimensions of trade work are replaced with concerns for technical conformity and high volume output, the essence of trade practice is transformed. Lost from the industrial workplace are the old-time tradespeople with their distinguishing qualities of dedication, pride, care, and responsibility, and possibly lost with them are the last vestiges of the crafts era. Those few artisans who still exist in today's workworld must find a certain irony in the situation — with the rise of modern industrial practice, crafts and other traditional occupational forms associated with handwork have been largely devalued; we have gone by the crafts era, and now we mourn the disappearance of the "real" tradesperson. As one of the instructors pondered, "Will the tradesperson of the future be simply another technician?"

To be a vocational educator requires not only a sustained relationship with the world of work but also an abiding commitment to people who endeavor to prepare themselves for working life. As human work and our relationship to it continue to evolve often in response to the shifting forces of the modern workplace as well as other societal currents, the conventional wisdom about vocational development also needs continued reassessment. But it seems that concerns for individual development often get low priority, particularly in the face of larger concerns about national labor market issues which predominate among politicians and administrators responsible for social planning. In the shadow of these political/economic interests, it is easy for vocational educators to lose sight of their educational responsibility and become preoccupied instead with matters of labor supply. When we allow this to occur, we invite the erosion of agogic ways of being that should give foundation to our practice; the role of helping learners in their development is too easily crowded out by societal (particularly economic) needs. In short, there is growing danger that agogic accompaniment of learners could be further devalued within the practice of vocational education, and should this be allowed to occur, vocational education will no longer be "education" but rather some process for fitting individuals to societal roles. Some educational critics would say that this has already happened and that extreme instrumentalism (preparing people for available jobs) has always been the essential part of vocational education's character (Kelly 1989) and a main contributing factor to the relative low status of this branch of education. Others would argue that it is the maintenance of a healthy labor force (appropriate supply/demand balances) that gives meaning to the vocational education enterprise. In the noise of various stakeholders — employers, governments, unions, and numerous special interest groups — competing in the promotion of their own self-interests, the calls of individual learners can be easily drowned out.

To be a vocational educator is to listen for these calls regardless of how difficult it may be to hear them among the competing noises. Like other educators, it means to be committed to learners, committed to accompanying them in their developmental journeys. For vocational educators, the developmental journey takes on a special form — the pursuit of a vocation which makes the educational undertaking more specific while at the same time making it more elusive, for the development of a vocation is not a simple, straightforward matter. What does it mean to develop a vocation, and how can we best assist others in their vocational development? As the instructors in this study reflected on their own development as well as their experiences in guiding others into the trades, they described some of the opportunities as well as the pitfalls that engaged them in their day-to-day lives.

The instructors showed, for instance, that vocational development is something that can be nurtured by others who are willing to accompany a novice or aspiring artisan. And they pointed out too that there are numerous ways of accompaniment. In all of the various institutional structures and approaches for providing vocational education that have evolved over the years, possibilities for affecting an individual's vocational development can be created and exploited through the agogic concerns of committed mentors. Conversely, when agogic interests are lacking, then neither the traditional journeyman-apprentice relationship nor the formal structure of the modern college classroom can offer an effective response to the novice artisan's developmental needs.

This is not to downplay the differences which may exist between apprenticeship, on-the-job training, community colleges, and other arrangements for the provision of vocational education. Obviously, these different structures grew from different circumstances at different times in history and in response to different social needs. The point here is not to enter a lengthy analysis concerning the appropriateness or effectiveness of one structure or approach over another, nor was that a major interest in this study (although comparisons were frequently made in the stories). It is instructive, however, to note the commonality of experiences among instructors in this study whose vocational development occurred through these various approaches. Issues like having the freedom to explore new facets of the workplace, gaining exposure to the broadest possible aspects of the trade, working side by side with a journeyman whose steady hand and watchful eye would keep a novice out of harm's way, and listening to the stories of the veterans permeated the good experiences regardless of which approach to vocational education was being recounted by the instructors. From their stories we see that agogic relationships can grow in various settings provided that care and responsibility for the learners' development is the guiding purpose for the relationship.

It is this issue, the existence of an agogic relationship, that lends some significance from the human science perspective to the discussion of approaches to vocational education. For instance, just taking the two common approaches to vocational education — employer-sponsored training and college-based programming — aside from the numerous structural comparisons and contrasts that could be made, possibly the most fundamental distinction that should be made is in their settings or locations. Obviously, one is the workplace and the other is a school; what gives meaning to one does not necessarily give meaning to the other. Their essential purposes are different. Schools are not factories and factories are not schools; even when we attempt to simulate the factory within a school (through the creation of shops), the school remains fundamentally different than the factory. The same can be said about attempts to recreate the school within the factory. The principal purpose and character of each of the two settings remain in tact despite these efforts. In true dialectic fashion, it is at the same time the separateness and the connectedness of these two settings and the associated ways of being in the world offered through them that give meaning to the practice of vocational education.

Living consciously with the tension between these two worlds is an essential part of being a vocational educator. To be unaware of this separateness is to ignore the difference between practicing a trade and teaching a trade. We saw illustrations in some of the instructor stories of what can happen when there is insufficient attention paid to the distinction between trades practice and teaching as two decidedly different ways of being in the world. Recognition of this essential difference can be easily passed over when teaching is understood as a natural and appropriate mid-career option available to anyone who has attained a recognized level of qualification and a reasonable bank of experience in a particular occupation. Again, as illustrated in some of the stories, some would view these as the only criterion relative to the enactment of the instructor role.

The particular way in which vocational educators develop is one of the features that distinguishes their branch of educational practice from the larger educational community devoted to the education of children. In vocational education it is common to approach teaching not as an initial career but, rather, as a role that one might come to after achieving certain expertise and gaining substantial life experience in an applied field — in other words, after being something else. Becoming a welding instructor is possible only after first being a welder; the same can be said of nursing educators, police instructors, and engineering professors. Bernard (in Chapter 6) may have expressed it most aptly: *all of us were people who went out and did it. And now we have come back to teach it.* But before one can *come back to teach it,* one must first *go out and do it* — in industry, or business, or public service or wherever the calling emanates. As Monica and Bert (in Chapter 5) illustrate, the possibilities of teaching their trades never occurred to them (at least consciously) until sparked by their shifting mid-career circumstances.

This typically late entry or what some might consider to be a "back door" entry to a teaching career is an important factor in pursuing an understanding of the nature of adult vocational education (as well as some other branches of postsecondary education). The notion of teaching in a vocational program without first establishing a substantial background (training and work experience) in the particular occupational field in question is inconceivable. In keeping with this attitude, practitioners are generally past their late thirties before being considered suitably seasoned for a teaching role in their field. But as illustrated in some of the instructor stories, there are various and competing views among vocational educators regarding what constitutes an appropriate background for a vocational educator. We saw instances in which old world journeymen guided their young apprentices through their trade development in an almost timeless fashion. Then there were illustrations in which veteran tradespeople left their practice in industry to assume college teaching positions, a transition that calls further attention to our need to understand teaching in one's occupation. It is through the examination of these transitional experiences that the question of development as vocational educators is raised with increasing importance.

From the instructor stories there could be no question surrounding the importance of instructors within the vocational education enterprise, but what emerged with even greater clarity was the manner in which individual tradespeople lived their roles as instructors. The research participants showed various ways to be trades instructors. They showed, for instance, what it was like when instructors could not differentiate between practicing their trade and guiding new entrants into their trade. They also showed what it was like when instructors could not see their learners' developmental needs or when they allowed their own personal needs and interests to take precedence over their learners'. But in all of the instructor stories, whether they seemed to offer strong or weak illustrations of vocational teaching, whether we seemed drawn or repelled by the characters and their practices, the central issue which gives meaning to the stories is the quality of agogic purpose with which the instructors lived. To be a vocational instructor is to stand in life in an agogic way, caring and taking responsibility for others in their vocational development.

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APPENDIX 'A'

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Contained within this Appendix is one of the interview transcripts developed in this study. This particular transcript provided the basis for story #6 (pages 139-143). My purpose in including a sample of the interview transcripts is to illustrate the nature of dialogue that occurred with the research participants and to show the form of the "raw data" from which the twelve stories in this study were extracted. A careful reading of this transcript and the resultant story on page 139 as well as the hermeneutic discussion that follows it will show the progression from dialogical interview to story to theme.

It should be noted that in order to safeguard the anonymity of research participants, some portions of the original text had to be either deleted or changed. Wherever possible, these alterations were made by substituting fictitious names in efforts to preserve the personal nature of the conversation without unduly changing the substance or theme of the text. In some cases where name changes could not sufficiently safeguard identities, entire paragraphs (were) deleted. Missing also is the preamble to the interview in which the central topic and purpose of the dialogue was established.

The portions of the research participant's comments (in this case, Martin's) which were incorporated directly into the resultant story are shown in italics. For the purpose of thematic analysis, these portions could be considered "highlighted." Through a comparison of the original interview text and the resultant story, it is possible to identify the scale and nature of "editing" that was employed to facilitate the transformation of these selected portions of dialogue into complete and self-contained stories.

Researcher Okay, so in this interview we really want to spend our time talking about some of the other educators that you've known and worked with.

Martin *Okay. The ones that affected me most in vocational education . . . the first one that comes to mind is a guy called Art Westerly. It wasn't so much that I spent an awful lot of time with Art, but he sort of made me feel welcome. When I first walked in the door he sort of shook my hand and said, "We're glad that you can be here, Martin, and I wish you well" and that sort of thing. That made me feel part of the place very quickly.*

Another one, some other people who I enjoyed working with as instructors, another was Doug Michaels, who happened to be one of the faculty, I think, for a while anyway, or at least part of the faculty of the Voc Ed Program, and to be quite frank with you, Bob, I can't say enough about the Voc Ed Program. There were some people though that I wasn't particularly impressed with . . . *one guy was . . . I maybe shouldn't say it, the old devil's gone now but* . . . a guy called Dr. Russell. A nice fellow but I took a class from him, that was my first experience with university education, and *I often thought that education was stratified where you get the K to 12 at the bottom, technical institutes next, and then university being the highest or the pinnacle. I took a class from Communications, it gave me a very brief introduction to instructional skills for about a week or two weeks, and the next class I took was a university class from Dr. Russell. Well the standard of teaching and the content, I felt, was drastically below the standard of the people at the college.*

Researcher Is that right?

Martin Yeah, and *I was really disappointed. I could hear the comments of the industrial instructors saying that university was a bit of joke,* etc., etc. And it was a bit of a joke. *I thought this was just one particular instructor who didn't make the subject particularly interesting, or I wasn't interested in it, or whatever. And so my first introduction to university wasn't particularly stimulating, but I got over that. With the introduction of the Voc Ed Program, again I felt it* *was an asset, especially in the instructional skills, the testing, different things like that.*

Researcher What I want you to try to think about in this interview is to take an example of somebody that you had an opportunity to work with or worked close to, as an educator. Can you . . .

Martin About the only time I ever worked closely with anybody in my role as an instructor, actually I worked for the counselling program for a while, when I came to this school, basically was "here's a week orientation and there's the classroom" so I didn't really work closely with anybody.

Researcher So you went into the machine shop department?

Martin Yeah.

Researcher And how many instructors were there?

Martin There were two instructors there; and I don't like to talk about the negative aspects, I've got over that, but I felt there was friction there. *There was friction there because I was coming from the university classes and seeing how things might be done better, and people in the different departments wanted things to stay the same.*

Researcher The other two members of the department didn't have a university background?

Martin *Right, and there was, towards the end, constant friction because I wanted to change things, what I thought was for the better and they didn't. In fact, it got to a point because of my bullheadedness to some extent and wanting change that it got to serious friction there for a while. Fortunately, I was asked, during that period of time, to work as a counsellor.* I worked for a year with a guy called Bill Hybauer, and this was about the only guy whom I've had work with me closely in the educational field, which I feel has had an affect on me.

Researcher Let's just go back to that issue, not that I want to pry into a difficult relationship, but it's interesting to me that because you had a different orientation, or you looked at the program differently, it put you at odds with the people who had been there previously. I'm not saying anything critical about anyone, it's just an interesting case around which to develop a problem.

Martin *The problem, as I see it Bob, was this. I felt the people who were in the department did not want any changes.* I think they wanted . . .

Researcher Any changes to the program?

Martin Any changes to the program. *They wanted to maintain the status quo, and this is critical, they wanted to maintain the status quo because it was easy to maintain the status quo at that point in time.*

Researcher And what kind of changes were you getting restless about?

Martin *We had an examination which was, to me, outstanding — outstanding because I think it had about 110 questions, multiple choice, and I think at least 14 of them were totally ambiguous, and it got to the point that I would get up in the classroom before,* to save me any embarrassment and derogatory remarks and stress afterwards, *and I would say to the students, "if I was you and was asked the question about this, this is the answer I would give." And that was about the only way I could maintain my credibility with some of the students because on one or two occasions they basically fell out of their seats laughing when you tried to justify them. So after a little bit of experience as an instructor.* Basically that was an example. And so we also started, at that time, working on competency based education, CBE, developing modules, which I enjoyed quite a bit. Like there was a deliberate, a deliberate attempt to screw up the system. To sabotage the system.

Researcher So that CBE wouldn't be used?

Martin Would not be introduced. A deliberate attempt.

Researcher Why was there so much concern about introducing CBE?

Martin I think because, at that point in time, it had a very negative reputation around the school.

They didn't want to develop the modules, okay, but I was being paid to develop the modules. I would develop some materials on a given lesson within a module, and it would

	sit. It was supposed to be looked at by my supervisor and then passed on, but it would sit there for a month or six weeks, and this guy wasn't particularly busy. In fact I thought he wasn't busy at all. If that situation occurred now, with the experience that I have now in this school, I would have definitely gone about it in a different manner. I would have demanded more, I would have insisted more, but in that point in time I was relatively new to the system and I didn't know what my rights were or what I should be doing.
Researcher	There were two other people in the program, two other instructors?
Martin	Yeah, Geoff was one of them and Philip the other.
Researcher	I don't know either of them. It's nothing to do with them, but why do you suppose they were resistant to change, like something as simple to correct as an exam that is not very well developed? Why do you suppose they wouldn't want to take that task on and reconstruct it?
Martin	I don't honestly know. And that was one of the frustrating parts.
Researcher	What would be some possible reasons?
Martin	Some possible reasons, one of things was, *when I came into the department I was thirty years old, I was physically fit, I really enjoyed the job and I was wanting to go, I was wanting to do things well, really well. I think I upset people unknowingly or unwittingly.*
Researcher	Because of your enthusiasm?
Martin	*Because of my enthusiasm, yeah. And my attitude too, I think. And I think because it was specifically me that introduced the changes or said these things should be changed.*
Researcher	Why do you suppose that they resisted or that there was so much antagonism over your promoting changes?
Martin	*I think it was idleness, actually, on behalf of the head instructor.*

Researcher They didn't want to get into all the work it would take . . .
Martin Lack of . . . I think it was just idleness, yeah. I believe that.

Researcher They were older than you?

Martin I shouldn't say "they". *It was idleness on the part of the head instructor and the other guy followed him.*

Researcher They were both more experienced in the program?

Martin Older, and from a local background.

Researcher You mentioned once that you had some university preparation; neither of them did, did they?

Martin At that point, they didn't have. And I think that might be one of the reasons too. I wouldn't care. *The reason I was doing it (university classes) at that point in time; it was basically to make me a better instructor and so that I could better serve the machine shop program. But I don't think it was ever seen that way.* That was my . . . *I wanted to be a better instructor. I just looked at it: I'm a good machinist and I want to be a better instructor,* I wanted to go to school to learn the theory, and the theory of teaching to be found in the Vocational Education programs. And I think it was friction; there was friction there.

I think as well, mind you, at the same time, if you have a group of people working together for long periods of time, unless you are very lucky, or unless somebody's doing something right to make the pot work, you are going to get friction, in organizations like this. I'm not into organizational behavior but I'm pretty sure of that. I think it happens in the army, civil service . . . after a period of time you tend to say something which upsets somebody and you tend to dwell on that. Maybe that's what happened there too.

Now were there any good things? Hmmm.

Researcher Talk about somebody that had a positive influence on you.

Martin Dave Neudorf was one of those guys.

Researcher Go ahead, talk about that. What was it like working with him?

Martin	Working with Dave was probably the best working experience that I think I've ever had. Anywhere. And the reason I say that is, you almost thought that the guy was there to support you. He never judged you harshly. He always there. Always there for advice. It was a very pleasant working experience.
Researcher	I always used to hear a lot about Dave. I never met him myself.
Martin	He had an Anglo-Irish background. I asked him one day, there was a . . . he wrote the outline for the machine shop curriculum for Canada. And I asked him one time about some item he had in the curriculum, and he said, "Well, at one time, Martin, both me and God knew." He said, "Now only God knows" (laughing).
Researcher	Was he the original head of the machine shop program?
Martin	He was the original head. *One thing that ticked me off about the machine shop program, Bob, we had a real good program then. It was probably as advanced as it could be in the 50s and early 60s, and then it sort of stopped and it didn't go anywhere. And we had one of the best machine shops if not the best machine shop, I'm talking about the physical, in North America, as far as I was concerned. And we should have maintained that. We should have been looking outwards,* what's Saskatchewan doing, what's Ontario doing, what's Texas doing? We should have been looking at what these people were doing and maintained the first class learning place in the machine shop department. *It was always my idea to be the best machine shop in North America, and I was ticked off that people didn't have the same idea. We could have had that, actually.*
Researcher	So is the program in very good shape now?
Martin	No.
Researcher	How many instructors are there now?
Martin	Two. The head instructor and a new guy.
Researcher	Is Geoff still the head instructor?

Martin Yeah. I'll have young chaps come down to me, that I've taught, and they want to go to the Apprenticeship Branch to complain, but, I don't know what it's like now but that's sort of. . .

Researcher Would you ever go back there? If you could take it over and run it and make it into what you think it should be?

Martin I might. I might go back. I might do that.

Researcher How long has he got to retirement?

Martin About five years. That's the way it is right now.

Something else, going back to our last interview. When I thought about it later, what we spoke about, was, the people who influenced me always seemed to have the same traits. They were understanding. They were usually expert in what they did, whichever it was, whether it was teaching, or whatever. They were experts in what they did. They had understanding, empathy for the situation that I was in, and they were always very helpful. And I think, as an apprentice, I can remember the people who I felt were that way from the apprenticeship, I tried to follow their example when I was a mason. And when I came here, there were instructors around who had those traits and I thought, if I wanted to be like anybody it was like some of these people that I had mentioned. To be understanding, helpful to the people who were trying to learn with me. And I was an expert myself in what I did. I know that. I can say that. And that's the philosophy that would be . . . the resulting philosophy. It sounds very good, but that's the way I feel, anyway, and some people would tell that about me. Maybe not everybody, but one or two might (laughing).

APPENDIX 'B'

SAMPLE STORY WITH THEMATIC NOTATIONS

story #6: ideals and frustrations

I used to think that education was stratified where you get elementary school at the bottom, then high school, technical institutes and community colleges next, and then university being the highest or the pinnacle. I'm sure this sounds ridiculous, maybe it's my old upbringing from the UK, but I believed that the quality or standard of education got better as you advanced to the higher levels! I took a short course here at the college — it gave me a very brief introduction to instructional skills for about a week or two weeks — and the next class I took was a university class, I maybe shouldn't say anything — the old devil's gone now. Well, the standard of teaching and the content, I felt, was drastically below the standard of the people at the college. Hell, I could teach better than that, and I was just a tradesman! That was my first experience with university education.

stratified view of education

the shocking realities of university education

I was really disappointed. I could hear the comments of the industrial instructors saying that university was a bit of joke. But I didn't accept that; I thought this was just one particular instructor who didn't make the subject particularly interesting, or I wasn't interested in it, or whatever. And so my first introduction to university wasn't particularly stimulating, but I got over that. With the introduction of the new program, again I felt it was an asset, especially in the instructional skills, the testing, different things like that. I really needed a more formal preparation as an instructor although not everyone here would agree with me. When I

blue collar view of academia

self-doubt

in search of the teaching trade

there has to be more to teaching

came to this college, basically it was "here's a week orientation and there's the classroom" so I didn't really work closely with anybody in learning my role as an instructor. I never really got that until later when I got involved in the university program. But that caused me some problems too.

With the other instructors in my program, a lot of friction developed. There was friction there because I was coming from the university classes and bent on seeing how things might be done better, and most of our people wanted things to stay the same. Right, and there was, towards the end, constant friction because I wanted to change things, what I thought was for the better and they didn't. In fact, it got to a point because of my bullheadedness to some extent and wanting change that it got to serious friction there for a while. Fortunately, I was asked during that period of time to take on another assignment outside the department.

university education separated him from co-instructors

saw himself as enlightened

The problem, as I see it, was this: I felt the people who were in the department did not want any changes in the program. They wanted to maintain the status quo, and this is critical, they wanted to maintain the status quo because it was easiest thing to do. I'll give you an example.

We had an examination which was, to me, outstanding — outstanding because it was so bad! I think it had about 110 questions, multiple choice, and I think at least 14 of them were totally ambiguous. On one or two occasions some of the students basically fell out of their seats laughing when they read the questions and I tried to justify them. So

embarrassed by some of the practices in the program *after a little bit of experience as an instructor, I would get up in the classroom before hand and I would say to them, "If I were asked a question about this, this is the answer I would give." And that was about the only way I could maintain my credibility with some of the students.*

Now I'm not trying to lay all the blame for this friction onto the older instructors. When I came into the department I was thirty years old, I was physically fit, I really enjoyed the job and I was wanting to go, I was wanting to do things well, really well. I think I upset people unknowingly or unwittingly. Because of my enthusiasm, yeah. And my attitude too, I think. And I think because it was specifically me that introduced the changes or said these things should be changed.

"owns" some of the blame for the conflict

The main problem, I think, was idleness, actually, on behalf of the head instructor and some of the other older guys simply followed him. They didn't want to get into all the work it would take to overhaul some flaws in the program. I mean, the reason I was doing university classes at that point in time was basically to make me a better instructor and so that I could better serve the program. But I don't think it was ever seen that way. I wanted to be a better instructor. I just looked at it: I'm a good tradesman and I want to be a better instructor. But that's not the way it was seen by some of the others.

older instructors were content with their common-sense view of teaching

One thing that ticked me off about this particular department was that we had a real good program then. It was probably as advanced as it could be in the 50s and early 60s, and then it sort of stopped and it didn't go anywhere. And we had one of the best shops if not the best shop in our trade, I'm talking about the physical — especially the equipment, in North America, as far as I was concerned. And we should have maintained that. We should have been looking outwards and maintained the first-class learning place in this trade. It was always my idea to be the best shop in North America, and I was ticked off that the others didn't have the same idea. We could have had that, actually. We had it once, and we gave it up! And in my mind, the result has been that our trade has gone downhill!

cannot accept the lack of concern for standards

a lack of pride and self-respect

APPENDIX 'C'

ETHICS APPROVAL

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
Application for Departmental Ethics Review

Instructions: Submit *five* copies of this application to the Department's Research Ethics Review Coordinator

Date: 23 April 91

COPY

Requester(s)

Robert M. Priebe (Name) Staff ___ *Ph.D. Student _*_ *M.Ed. Student ___

___ (Name) Staff ___ *Ph.D. Student ___ *M.Ed. Student ___

*Advisor's Name: Prof. Max van Manen

Title of Project: Voc Talk: Stories from the Back of the School

A phenomenological inquiry into the meaning of Vocational Education

Description of Project:

This description should be limited to a maximum of 600 words and attached to the application. It should include a brief discussion of the purpose(s), methodology, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Review Panel:

Name

___

___

___

___

Signature of Panel Chairperson: ___

Date: ___

___ This application conforms with the provisions contained in the University Policy Related to Ethics in Human Research document.

___ This application does not conform with the provisions contained in the University Policy Related to Ethics in Human Research document.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
Application for Departmental Ethics Review

Voc Talk: Stories from the Back of the School

A Dissertation Proposal
By Robert M. Priebe
April 1991

purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to inquire into the meaning of vocational education as reflected through the experiences of men and women who serve as educators in postsecondary vocational education institutions. By entering the lived experiences of practicing vocational educators, it is my intent to develop insights into the ways in which they give meaning to their practice. Through listening to their stories I hope to be able to respond to the following research questions:

> *What is the meaning of vocational education?*
>
> > *What does it mean to be an adult vocational educator? What is the experience like?*
> >
> > *What distinguishes it as a field of study and practice and gives it its special meaning? What does "vocational" mean in this setting? How can the concepts of pedagogy and andragogy contribute to an understanding of vocational education?*
> >
> > *How could an enriched conception of vocational education contribute to the larger project of recovering what it means to be human?*

methodology

The research orientation proposed in this study is drawn from the human science traditions and more specifically from the field of phenomenological research as described by scholars such as Giorgi, Fischer, and Murray (1975); Barritt, Beekman and Mulderij (1983); Polakow (1984); and most recently Van Manen (1990). Often described as researching lived experience, this form of inquiry involves looking deep into our everyday modes of being to strip away the habits of engrained practice to enable us to uncover the structures of those experiences which give meaning to our being human. It requires us to put aside unquestioned traditions and habits, the taken for granted views and attitudes, and the prevailing theoretical notions of what experience is like in order to commit ourselves to a deep and original inquiry into concrete human experience. To inquire into the lived experience of vocational educators is to ask, "What is it like to live life as a vocational educator?" "What is the experience like, and what gives it meaning?" "How is it different from other educational modes of being in the world?" It is a strong commitment to the search for meaning of a particular mode of being in the world that turns me to phenomenological inquiry; in this case, the commitment is to a deeper understanding of what it means to "be" a vocational educator, an andragogue in a post secondary vocational institution, someone who stands in life with a commitment to helping others in their quest for vocation.

The focus of this study is on the lived experiences of middle-aged men and women who have spent most of their working lives as adult vocational educators. Their stories contain insights into their vocational development, their experiences as workers in industrial fields, and finally as adult educators. These stories will be collected through a series of interviews intended to help the participants reflect on particular aspects of their experiences as adult vocational educators and elucidate them as personal stories.

data analysis

The personal stories gathered through the interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher and then examined in a search for essential themes. By understanding a story's theme, it is my intent to isolate and distill the intention of the storyteller into a dense nucleus which can be viewed as a foundation and structure of the recounted experience. Viewed in this way, a theme represents the heart of the narrative, connecting and sustaining all parts of the story. When we come face to face with the theme(s) we begin to understand what gives meaning to an experience not only for the storyteller but also for others who can see this particular experience as a possible experience of their own. Through thematic analysis we strive for access to the intersubjectivity of human conduct.

ethical considerations

Interview subjects (approximately six) will be invited to share stories of their experiences through individual interviews. Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be shared with the interview subjects who may then delete or edit any portions thereof. The interview material will be held confidentially, and subjects' names, specific titles, locations, and institutional affiliations will be deleted from references in the text of the study. All treatment of the interview data will be handled by the researcher; no research assistants will be involved in any aspect of the inquiry or the development of the text. Interview subjects will also have the opportunity to review the draft text of the study to verify ethical use of the data.

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